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*Daily Mi*

THE HEALING HAND

# HOSPITALS UNDER FIRE

*But the Lamp Still Burns*

*edited by*

GEORGE C. CURNOCK

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

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## THE LAMP STILL BURNS

No reader will expect to find in this little book a full account of the bombing of British hospitals. Nevertheless, some apology is due to those who, knowing hospitals which have suffered possibly worse things than are here related, will feel that some mention should have been made of their trials.

Since the material for these chapters was collected, at the suggestion of Mr Sydney Walton, president of the hospital on Harrow Hill, which has, happily, so far escaped the malicious intent of the Hun, many more hospitals have been, and are being, cruelly attacked. Neither space, time, nor the Censor will permit the inclusion of all. The book is therefore confined to a few which stood the first onslaught of the Luftwaffe and the Blitzkrieg. Let us remember that they and their staffs faced unknown dangers, as did the men who formed the first rescue parties, and the women who drove by night the first ambulances. This, then, is a tribute to these pioneers, and a mirror to the brave deeds of thousands whose courage has been not the less because they have known by the experience of others what they are facing.

If I have not given the worst that might have been told, I have at least endeavoured to show, in the simple words of some who went through the events of last

autumn and winter, what they saw, heard, and felt. It has also been my intention to give something of the happier side, making mention of wonderful escapes, miraculous recoveries, and the brighter future which may yet await even the most terribly wounded. It has been a pleasure, too, to incorporate a little story in which "Mrs D.," of Ripley Court, "hopes it will be a boy," and thus illustrate what has been done by the hospitals to provide some measure of peace and quiet for the expectant mothers of shelter-land.

Finally, as one who has seen many wounded hospitals, let me give the reader this firm assurance: *Despite everything, the hospitals are carrying on, successfully, magnificently, and with unquenchable spirit—the spirit of Florence Nightingale. The Lamp Still Burns!*

THE EDITOR.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are due to those who, dreading the suggestion of publicity, have yet allowed me to quote what they have to say. The book owes everything to them. Several said quite plainly that they spoke only "because it may help the hospitals"—as, indeed, I hope it will.

I am further indebted to the art editors of several newspapers and news-photo agencies who have assisted me in illustrating the book. Their names are associated with the pictures in the text.

I am very grateful for assistance received from the hospitals themselves, and particularly Westminster, with whose fortunes I have been associated for some years past.

THE EDITOR.



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## HOSPITALS UNDER FIRE

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WHAT THE STOKER DID

THROUGH FLOOD AND FIRE AT  
THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL









ALL NIGHT THE CHILDREN WERE UNDER FIRE

## CHAPTER I

### WHAT THE STOKER DID

#### THROUGH FLOOD AND FIRE AT THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

WILLIAM PENDLE, ex-Royal Navy stoker, London bred and born, was on duty in his boiler-room twenty feet below the road-level. In the buildings above him were 46 sick children, from two weeks to twelve years old, guarded by nurses, doctors, and staff, all that remained, with some air-raid casualties, of Great Ormond Street, the most famous children's hospital in the world.

Before midnight, Pendle was sitting in front of a boiler, on a little stool, watching his pressure-gauges. Occasionally he rose, opened a door on the face, and stoked the furnace which blazed before his eyes.

*Whe-e-e . . . cr-r-r-ump!* . . . His stool shook and he jumped to his feet. That was a near one! . . . *Whe-e-e . . . cr-r-r-ump!* The whole building shivered again. . . . *Whe-e-e . . . CRUMP!! . . . Swi-i-sh!* . . . A flash of flame and a blast from the north-east corner of the boiler-house took him nearly off his feet.

Three hits—the first on the old building which Dickens knew and loved—the second on the roof of the new one finished but a few years ago—and the third? Let William tell the story:

"The third bomb put us right out of action. Came down in Guilford Street. Just back of the boilers. Must have missed the building by a yard. Went clear through the roadway and into the old cellars under it. That's where the gas and water mains are. They connect with the hospital, and in fact belong to us. As soon as I went up the stairs to the back of the boiler-room I could see what had happened. That bomb had busted the lot, broken the water-mains and fired the gas.

"Seeing what was on, and the water coming along like a river, I went back to my boiler to draw the fire and get the pressure down.

"It was lucky I had only one out of three boilers working. It was summer-time, and the hospital also not working to full strength on account of the war. The pressure being steady at 36 lb., I began to rake out the fire. Mr Richardson will tell you what it was like in the cellar."

Richardson is the Children's Hospital chief plumber, in charge of all pipes and service repairs. To get to the cellar he had to push and wade through water which now covered every approach. He hoped as he went that he might be able to cut off some of the flood. This is what he found:

"The gas-main was blazing like fury. The water-mains were smashed and gushing water. Thousands of gallons. No earthly chance of stopping that. You mustn't do that while the Fire Brigade is working. No matter what goes, you must give the firemen a chance.



CHILDREN SLEPT HERE IN GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL





"When I went in it was up to my knees, and near to my waist when I came out again.

"Meanwhile the hospital was taking it all, down the areas, and from them into the boiler-room, which is the lowest spot in the building.

"Seeing there must be trouble down there, I went down to lend a hand if need be. There was William, water already over his boots and more coming in every second by the stairway nearest the cellars and the broken mains. He was doing all any man could, so I went back, stopped the hospital intake pipes, and opened man-holes where I could find them in the areas."

Pendle was raking out the fire. What happened next?

"I went on raking. How long? As long as need be, until the pressure dropped to nothing."

"The water? How deep was that when you got out of the boiler-room?"

He looked to his shoes, then to a spot on his waist-coat and pressed his bottom rib. "About here," said the stoker.

"Waist-deep! And you got out! But how?"

"By the stairs," said William.

Richardson laughed: "What about the waterfall?"

"Well, there was water coming down *both* stairs."

"And how you got up I *don't* know," said Richardson.

"I know I was surprised to see you up again."

"What would have happened if that fire had not been drawn?"

William was silent. The possibility of such a thing had never occurred to him. As he had said, it was his duty to draw the fire, and he had done it.

Richardson answered the question: "I hate to think. Maybe a big explosion, with boilers wrecked and every service of the hospital ruined, to say nothing of the floors above."

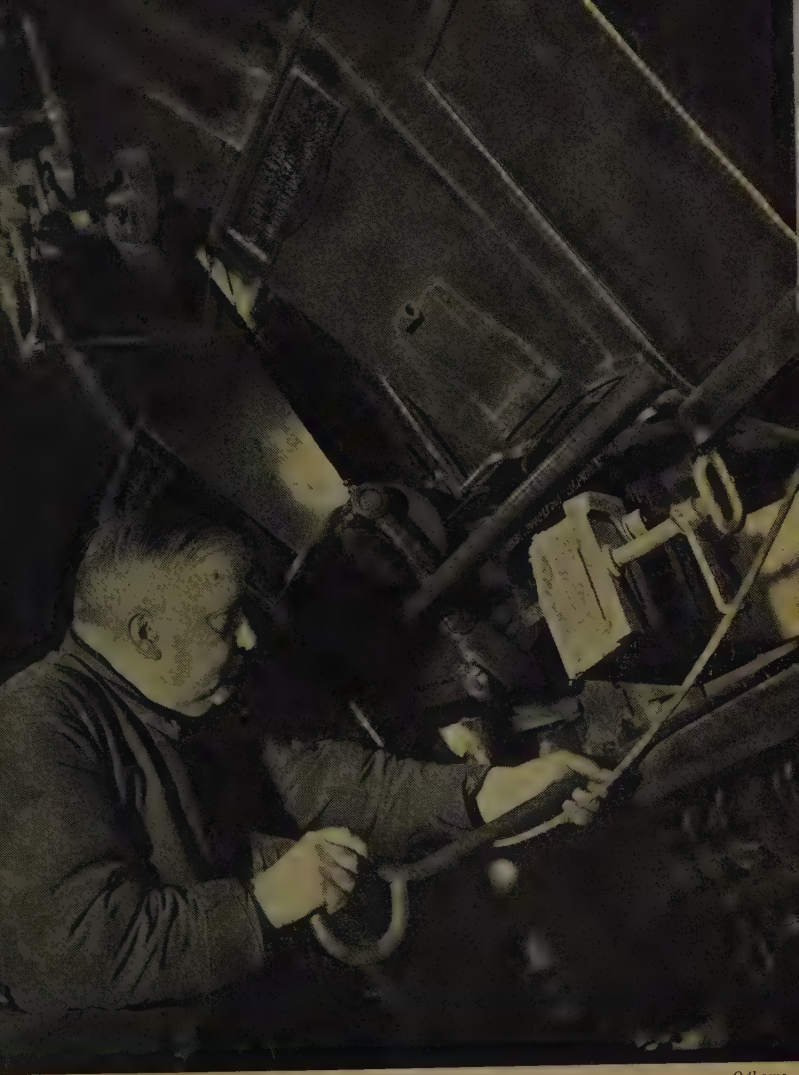
Pendle nodded assent. "You see," he explained, "my boilers are very sensitive. They're tubular, and when the fires are going the inside's a mass of flame."

"And that was the last you saw of them?"

"Not quite. When I thought the water had stopped I got a ladder across and went over the tops of them to see that all was right so far. The water did no harm, though they were well in it. In a day or two we had them working again."

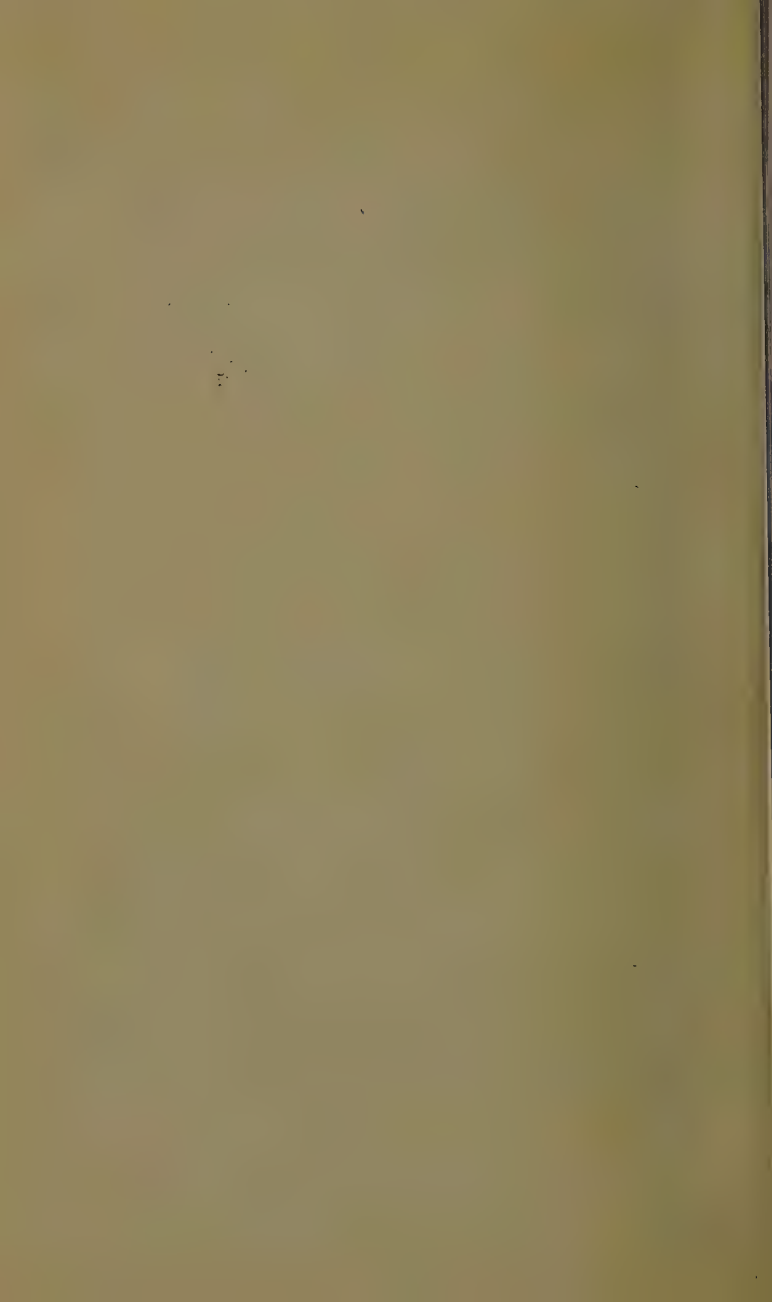
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William Pendle was given the George Medal for his good work; and well he deserved it. Flood-levels are to-day marked on the lower corridors of the hospital, many feet above the height of the boiler-tops. These levels must be seen to be believed. Visitors to Great Ormond Street can judge for themselves how the water rose. They may even hear how the flood lifted a solid cupboard containing stokers' clothes and other boiler-room gear and left it on the top of the steam-pipes above the boilers; where it sat when the flood subsided, like Noah's Ark on Ararat.



Odl.ams

WILLIAM PENDLE AT WORK  
*It was his duty, and he did it*





THE CHILDREN WERE SAVED

✓“An eye-witness” tells what he saw and heard on the upper floors of the Children’s Hospital on the night when Pendle won the George Medal:

“In the hospital there was no panic, not even when a high-explosive bomb tore a clean hole in the flat roof of the West Wing, passed through two upper floors, both reinforced, and detonated on its way through the second of these.

“The great building shuddered. Four wards and two lift-shafts were shattered. Falling glass swept through them like a storm. Fire followed.

“Within five minutes of this vile attack, the hospital’s own fire-fighters were mastering the flames.

“Forty-six children with their nurses were on the fifth floor. The steel-and-concrete ceiling above them held firm. There was not a crack in it; not an electric bulb was broken. Confidence of the hospital in its building was justified; the upper floors had taken the worst and the lower floors stood.

“With fire above and flood—from broken mains in the street behind us—below, there was but one thing to do. Safe though the children were for the moment, they must be moved.

“Then said the nurses, calmly smiling, to the children in their charge:

“‘Come along, we’re going to take you to see the searchlights.’

“I thought of Florence Nightingale as the nurses

carried the children to the safety of a near-by hospital, while bombs could still be heard exploding and the danger of shell-splinters was in the air. Some of the children thought it a huge joke to be taken out of bed. It was something different and exciting. All were out safely in ten minutes.

"Even as the children were rescued came word of another danger. Nurses and doctors in the operating theatre of the casualty-clearing station, to which air-raid victims were beginning to come, were trapped in fast-rising water. Three mains had burst.

"Personal perils were soon passed. Doctors and nurses were released, and there had been no loss of life.

"As dawn broke, I walked through the wards and corridors. The lower ground floor was like a deep river. From the first to the fifth floors all was dark and forlorn. On the sixth there was utter devastation. Battered and twisted cots mingled with shattered telephones, children's toys, story-books, fallen masonry and rubble. Still on the pillow of an upturned cot was a baby's cuddly elephant. There had been no children recently in this shattered ward; but a toy-cupboard had been burst open, giving an added and authentic horror to the scene. I did not attempt to imagine what that ward might have looked like had the children been in their little cots, instead of in safety down below.

"As I left this floor, I felt something brush against my boot. It was Andy the cat. Andy, alone of all the staff, had seen and heard everything on the sixth floor."

## WHAT THE SIREN SAID

"WE'VE DONE OUR DAMN'DEST,  
YOU CAN GO!"



## CHAPTER II

### 'WHAT THE SIREN SAID

"WE'VE DONE OUR DAMN'DEST, YOU CAN GO!"

THE King has given the George Medal to Dr Andre Bathfield, Resident Medical Officer, Miss Catherine McGovern, Assistant Matron, and Miss Patricia Marmion, Staff Nurse, all of the Royal Chest Hospital, City Road, London.

Badly wounded, severely bruised and shocked, by an explosion which destroyed the whole face of the hospital, none of them would leave their place of duty until all their patients had been removed from the debris which covered their beds, and had been sent safely to another hospital near by. A third hospital, to which Nurse Marmion was afterwards taken as a patient, was bombed on the night she arrived. "Though the floor of the ward in which she was lying was strewn with broken glass, she immediately jumped out of bed and, in her bare feet, assisted in rescuing other patients." So reads a part of the King's Order making awards of his medal for gallantry to these three. Each of them showed the spirit which has animated so many like them in the hospitals of London and other martyred cities since the Blitz began.

The Assistant Matron, Miss Catherine McGovern,

thus tells what happened at the Royal Chest Hospital one early morning in September 1940:

"We were in the board-room of the hospital, on the ground floor, slightly above the street-level, on the night our great smash came. We were using the room as a casualty reception-room. A desk was in one corner by the window; in the other corner stood a table with bottles and dressings laid out for use as needed. We never knew what part of the hospital might be hit.

"It was between three and four in the morning. I was sitting in front of the fire with two Sisters. Dr Bathfield was standing talking to us. It was no night for bed. The alarm had gone; we had heard bombs exploding, and were ready to receive casualties.

"Up to this night we had been lucky. Four fire bombs had fallen on the hospital two weeks before, but all were put out by the staff with the help of Albert Davis, our resident engineer, who was a real hero that night, he telling us just what to do, and doing the roof work with Dr Cardew and others. One fell just outside my bedroom window, and another, which made us laugh, in the water-tank. That was a very small matter compared with this night.

"As we talked, I felt it was only a question of time when our turn would come. With many patients in the wards above us, some of them our own chest cases, and others bombed and injured people brought to us from their homes and shelters, the position was not an easy one. I think Dr Bathfield felt that, because he was just



*Planet*

THE MORNING AFTER AT THE ROYAL CHEST  
(See also page 64)





moving out of the room, intending no doubt to see how things were going in the wards, when it all happened.

"It came all of a sudden. One moment we were saying how glad we were that we had managed to get fifteen mothers and thirteen babies, brought to us from another hospital the night before, away to safety—and the next moment it seemed as if the whole hospital was lifted up and would fall down on top of us. The blast took us as we were and threw us all in a heap before a cupboard by the door. Electric cables, gas and water pipes were broken. Everything went black; the air was full of choking dust. The ceiling had come down. The walls and windows had come out. We were hit by everything that could move—the glass from the windows, the frames of the windows, the plaster from the walls, furniture, and the medicine bottles from the corner.

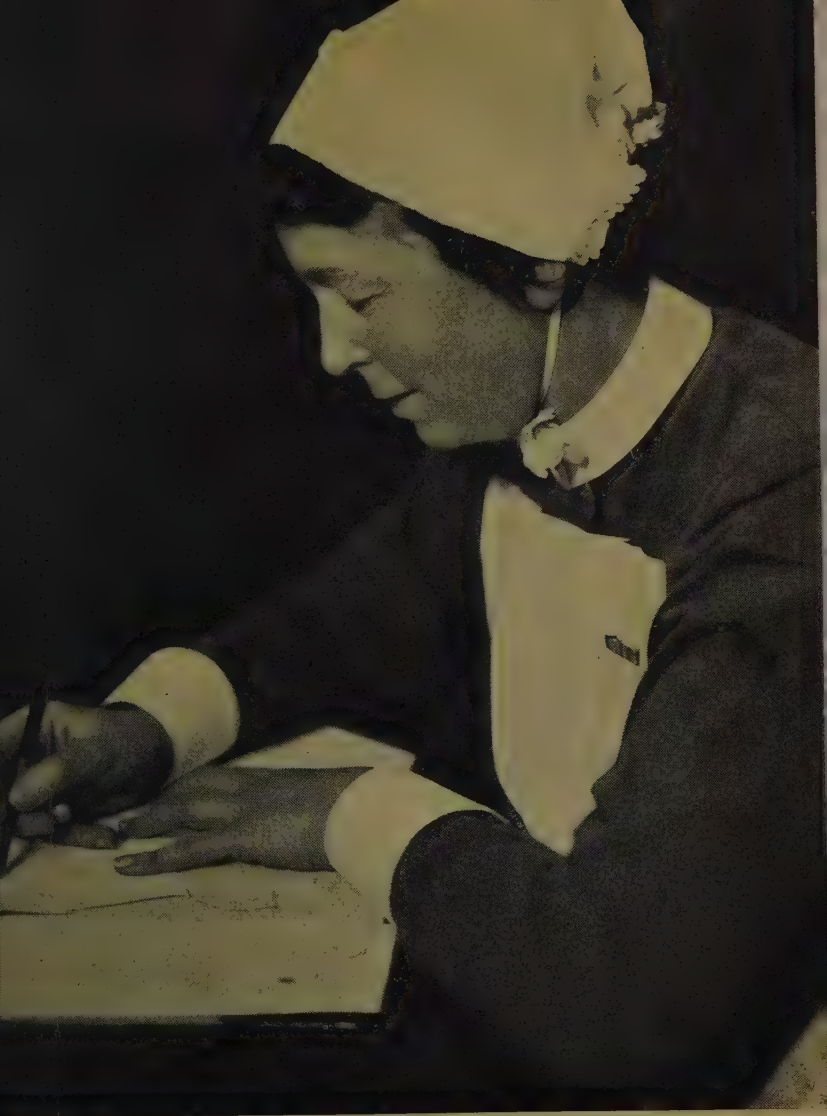
"There wasn't one of us who was not cut, mostly in the head, arms, or legs, and eye injuries; but none so badly that we couldn't get up, though afterwards everyone wondered how we managed to get out of the heap of stuff that poured on to us.

"At first we didn't know what had happened. It was quite plain that the face of the hospital was blown out. A good deal had come in; more had gone out. I thought as I got to my feet 'It must have been right on top of it—what *has* happened upstairs?' There were also the maids to think of; they were sleeping on mattresses in the basement. And what a miraculous escape they had! That big bomb went straight down just in front of

and under the main steps leading into the hospital and exploded on its way. Those maids were brave. They came up the broken stairs bringing stretchers, which were stored down below, and the porters with them. Everybody did what they thought best, and they were generally right.

"Doctors Bathfield and Cardew were splendid. Dr Bathfield was bleeding all the time from wounds in his face; but he only thought about the patients and how they could be taken out of their beds. There were two wards occupied, one by men and another by women. So there was plenty to do when we got upstairs. The only one missing was poor Davis, and as it turned out he was killed. He had been asleep on a mattress in his workroom down below. The bomb exploded very near to him. It seems that it threw a steel clamp violently off a bench and it hit his head.

"Staff Nurse Marmion, in charge of the men's ward, had a terrible time. Wounded as she was by glass, she first of all had to deal with a poor fellow from a shelter. The man had lost his whole family two nights before, and he went crazy when the bomb struck us. All her patients as they lay in bed were covered with rubble, and some pinned down. Marmion was going to one who lay by the window; the heavy frame had fallen on him, and he was calling out for her. But the wounded man from the shelter was in a worse state. He had managed to get out of bed. Calling out 'It's finished . . . this isn't going to happen to me again!' he was making his



*Nursing Mirror*

CATHERINE MCGOVERN  
*Assistant Matron and George Medallist*



way to throw himself from the great hole in the wall where the window had been, when Marmion caught him just in time and saved him from certain death. She thinks it was the sight of the blood streaming down her face that brought him back to his senses. He said to her, 'Let me be. You look after the others,' and he made his own way downstairs.

"She then went to the man with the heavy window-frame across his bed. His legs had already been broken in another raid. She got him to put his arms around her neck, and so lifted him on to her back and carried him downstairs into the basement. There she had to find a place to put him in safety.

"As soon as they saw what had happened to the hospital the police and wardens came in to help us. Fortunately the building did not catch alight, but the business of getting the patients out of the beds and into the ambulances through all the darkness was not easy. No one knew what they might be stepping into or what might fall on them.

"I felt I could not leave. The Matron was away owing to an accident and I was in charge. The others felt the same. The police urged us to go with the patients for treatment. I suppose we were not a very pretty sight. I had seven wounds, two in the neck and the rest in hands, legs, and feet. The worst was a wound in my thigh in which the glass still remained. I was bleeding badly. One of the policemen kindly stood by me in case I wanted help.

"While I was standing there, with my back to the hole where the bomb went through and watching the last of the patients being carried out, the 'All Clear' went. It just seemed to me that that old devil of a Hitler was saying: 'WE'VE DONE OUR DAMN'DEST, YOU CAN GO!'

"After that I felt I ought to make a round of the hospital to make sure everyone was out. I was glad to have the policeman's help, as I began to feel rather faint.

"We were all taken to various hospitals, where we were well looked after until I was able to be removed to the Royal Northern, our parent hospital. Nurse Marmion asked to be allowed to go to Grovelands Hospital, another part of the Royal Northern, thinking she would soon be well enough to get on with her nursing, and the very next night she was bombed again!"

---

Sister McGovern, having added the George Medal to the Royal Red Cross (Mons), Victory and General Services, given to her as a war nurse in 1914-1918, is back at the Royal Chest Hospital in charge of an outpatient clinic among the ruins.



WHEN "THE LONDON"  
TOOK IT

"THE PEOPLE ARE WONDERFUL,"  
SAID THE KING



### CHAPTER III

## WHEN "THE LONDON" TOOK IT

"THE PEOPLE ARE WONDERFUL," SAID THE KING

"THE LONDON," as the great hospital in Whitechapel Road is always called, received a surprise visit from the King and Queen on 24th September 1940. On this day, regardless of bombs and bombing, it was celebrating the 200th anniversary of its foundation.

The King and Queen "walked the wards" on this historic occasion with a smile, a word, a question for every patient. All there had been "through it"—the Royal visitors, the members of the hospital staff, and the patients in the wards, some of whom were victims of the bombs.

The patients were delighted to see the kindly, simple way the King and Queen moved from bed to bed. One aged Londoner, who was thought to be asleep, called to the Queen: "Where's your old man?" The King, hearing, went back with a smile and a word of greeting.

The patients who saw this Royal progress soon left for their homes or other hospitals—with one exception, a man who said with a happy smile when I saw him, "I walked the length of the ward yesterday. It was a start, anyway."

Bombs took this man to "The London," and bombs have followed him there. Yet he is quite undaunted,

and even contemptuous of "Jerry's effort." "When you've had a packet like mine and got through with it you don't worry any more. Will you write it down, Mister, and don't forget it, if there are any George Medals going about they should be given to hospital nurses. I've seen them going up and down this very ward more than once when the bombs were falling, and not paying any attention to them, only talking to the patients and telling them not to worry. Yes, and I've seen a surgeon putting stitches in the nose of a fireman in that bed over there, the night a bomb fell in the garden; just as cool as if nothing was happening."

This plucky man was in "The London" already four days when the King and Queen made their visit. Scores of bombs have exploded in and around the hospital, while he has remained tied to bed by severe leg and thigh injuries. This is the way he told his story of a talk with the King and Queen.

"What's your name?" asks the King. 'George Rader, Your Majesty,' says I.

"And a raider brought you here," says the King, laughing. 'Tell me what happened.'

"Well, Your Majesty,' I says, 'being a man who has taken first-aid I joined up with a stretcher-party when war broke out, and was in charge of No. 5 Party last week when a call came to Exmouth Street, which is in Commercial Road.

"When we got there, Your Majesty, we found a heap of bricks which had been a shelter, and people



*London Hospital*

THE ALEXANDRA NURSES' HOME, SEPTEMBER 1940



were beginning to pull them away. Seeing they might make matters worse for the people inside, I telephoned for the Rescue Party, and they were soon on the job. I'm sorry to say that the first people were beyond help, eight men they were; but tucked away in a far corner were four little children and their mother, and, thank God, all these were unharmed."

✓ Sister having told the King what damage a land mine did to the patient, the King said: "What do you remember after that?"

"I remember, Your Majesty,' says I, 'seeing a fire-man thrown right on top of the houses, and I believe that same man is still alive.'

"I told the King they brought me here with both legs broken, and saved my life, and my legs, so that one day I shall be about again. I also showed His Majesty a letter from Mr Winston Churchill, who came to see our Stretcher Party in July. Mr Churchill was pleased because our boys said to him: 'We are one hundred per cent with you'; which we were, and still are."

George Rader having had his say, "Sister" had something to add about the Royal visit and the happiness it brought to everyone:

"None of the patients knew they were coming. We only heard that morning. I believe they had intended to go elsewhere, but came to 'The London' because it was our bi-centenary. Seeing the other Sister and I were busy with the dinners, they asked us to carry on. So the dinners were served while Their Majesties were



going round. It was the most friendly and informal visit you can imagine. The King was like a house surgeon on his rounds. He looked at the charts, asked questions, and called the Queen's attention to interesting cases. The Queen chiefly wanted to know how the families were getting on, whether their homes had been bombed, and if the children were safe.

"She was very much moved by the case of one young soldier who had lost his father and mother. His sister had lost her leg in the same bombing. Then, to complete his misfortunes, while he and his fiancée were walking past Aldgate Station a bomb fell, and they were both brought to 'The London' with injuries, slight in her case, but so serious in his that he could never serve His Majesty again.

"The courage which Her Majesty showed in listening to so many of these stories and the sympathetic interest she took were really remarkable.

"I would also like to say," added Sister, "that we rather dreaded at first the arrival of friends of badly wounded air-raid cases, knowing how emotional people are in this part of London. But since then we have remarked how well the victims and their families behave. They take everything very quietly and really courageously."

During their visit the King and Queen saw many marks of Hun destruction, and heard how the hospital had experienced many strange mishaps and remarkable escapes. Here are just a few:



L.N.

"TELL ME YOUR STORY," SAID THE KING AT LONDON HOSPITAL



Half a dozen bomb explosions affected "The London" during the first intensive daylight raid. The first caused a breakdown in the lift service; the second smashed most of the windows in the front of the hospital and put an end to the electricity supply. Following on these came night raids with smashing blows on the Alexandra Nurses' Home (already evacuated and used for A.R.P. staff), the Luckes' Nurses' Home, where 150 nurses sheltering in the basement were found to be unhurt, and wrecked one floor of the laundry, then dealing with 60,000 pieces a week

In one raid the water in the nurses' swimming bath gave a splendid supply and checked a disastrous fire until the brigade came. When the main supply of drinking water was cut off the reserve water-tanks on the roof kept the hospital going until the service was restored.

Almost every raid in the East End during the intensive bombing of the autumn left its mark on some building or open space in the four and a half acres covered by the hospital. With all this, no patients were hurt; and slight injuries only were sustained by two Sisters and the Acting Matron, who were making their rounds when a high-explosive fell between the School of Physical Medicine and the Out-Patient Department, just missing the first-aid post.

An "All Clear" heralded the visit of the King and Queen; their departure was marked by an "Alert." That same evening a heavy-calibre bomb fell in the main

garden. It was dubbed by the staff "Goering's birthday present."

Lieutenant Davis, leader of the famous Bomb-Disposal Squad, visited the hospital on several occasions to examine unexploded bombs. With the aid of a stethoscope, borrowed from one of the doctors, he established the "liveliness" of one which was immovable. Later the Medical Superintendent presented the Lieutenant with a stethoscope, which he has since used on many occasions.

At the end of the Royal visit the King expressed his admiration of the way in which the medical staff and nursing services were carrying on, and the Queen told the hospital, in a special message, how "immensely proud" she is to be its President.

ST THOMAS THE MARTYR

WHAT BEFELL ON TWO TERRIBLE  
NIGHTS





## CHAPTER IV

### ST THOMAS THE MARTYR

#### WHAT BEFELL ON TWO TERRIBLE NIGHTS

ST THOMAS'S HOSPITAL is one of those objects which no flying Hun could miss in a raid on London. Its nine buildings, red brick and white stone, on the bank of the Thames face the Houses of Parliament. It has received more direct hits, involving greater material damage, than any other hospital in London. In two attacks ten of its medical and nursing staff were killed. Many others were wounded, but no patients were hurt.<sup>1</sup> Four members of the staff tell what befell them and others during these nights.

#### A NIGHT IN THE EARLY AUTUMN

The Sister-in-Charge of the Nurses' Home was resting between her half-hourly rounds on the second floor, when (in her own words)—

“The shaking of the hospital and a great roaring noise

<sup>1</sup> On a Monday in the autumn of 1940 a large bomb struck Block 1, caused the collapse of three floors, and the deaths of two nurses and four masseuses. One Sunday a very heavy bomb made a direct hit on the main corridor connecting all blocks. It penetrated to the basement, caused the collapse of the medical out-patient block and the sitting-room of College House, wrecked the kitchen, the canteen, dispensary, and administrative block. All essential services were put out of action. Fire broke out in the dispensary laboratory. Casualties were severe. Two house surgeons and one nurse were killed. The Assistant Chaplain, a house physician, and a

told me we had been hit. My light went out. My torch was swept away by the blast. The night air came in through the broken windows and I could feel the glass on the floor.

"A nurse came with a light, so I was now able to go to the sick-bay on the floor above, where we had four sick nurses and a fifth looking after them, and was tremendously relieved to find that they were safe. My V.A.D.<sup>1</sup> watchers, whom I had visited on the fifth floor during my rounds, and a nurse friend who had gone to see how they were getting on, were also unhurt.

"Two of our sick nurses were carried out on stretchers. The other two were able to walk with them to a safe place. Other nurses had been sleeping in the basement. Search was made for them by a rescue party. They couldn't reach the hospital any other way, because their staircase was blocked by fallen brick and plaster, so they climbed through the windows into the areas round the hospital at this point, and were helped by ladders to reach ground-level. Some of them were bruised and cut, but none were disabled.

"We also had to look for two of our nurses and four of the hospital's massage staff who were sleeping in Gassiot House, a block between St Thomas's Home and the Treasurer's House. Little could be seen in the pitch-darkness. The bomb had made a direct hit on this spot.

dresser were severely injured. A first-aid post voluntary helper died of her wounds.

Total material damage to St Thomas's is estimated at £1,500,000.—ED.

<sup>1</sup> Voluntary Aid Detachment.

✓ Roof and floors had collapsed. Iron girders and wooden beams, a water-tank, and a lot of other heavy stuff were piled one on top of the other. No light could be thrown on the wreckage because the planes were still overhead. The rescue party did their best. They got into the Treasurer's House and reported that someone appeared to be still living, though evidently buried under the wreckage, on the third floor of the adjoining house. No attempt could be made in the darkness to reach this portion of the house from the ground. Something, they thought, might be done by breaking through the wall of the Treasurer's House at the third floor. An ill-judged effort might make matters worse. They could only wait and hope for the dawn.

"When it was light I went with the men into the Treasurer's House, the stairs of which could be used. On the third floor I pointed out a fireplace where, if they could cut through, I thought they might find one of our massage staff, Miss Mortimer Thomas.<sup>1</sup> I

<sup>1</sup> Miss Barbara Mortimer Thomas was an Australian. She received her massage and electrical training at St Thomas's Hospital, and was permanently on the staff for several years. She was most skilled at all her tasks, and a pioneer of making use of massage in maternity work. In a letter written to her parents in Australia, after this cruel disaster, the Matron of St Thomas's said: "She was so gifted and so kind to her patients that her services were always in demand. We can ill spare her. In her short career she had already done much to further the reputation of St Thomas's Hospital." In reply to a cablegram breaking the news to them, her parents said: "Please thank all who tried to save Barbara. Our sympathy goes to all relatives of other victims." Miss Mortimer Thomas's three colleagues, who were killed at once by the fall of the same building, were equally gifted workers in her important branch of medical service.

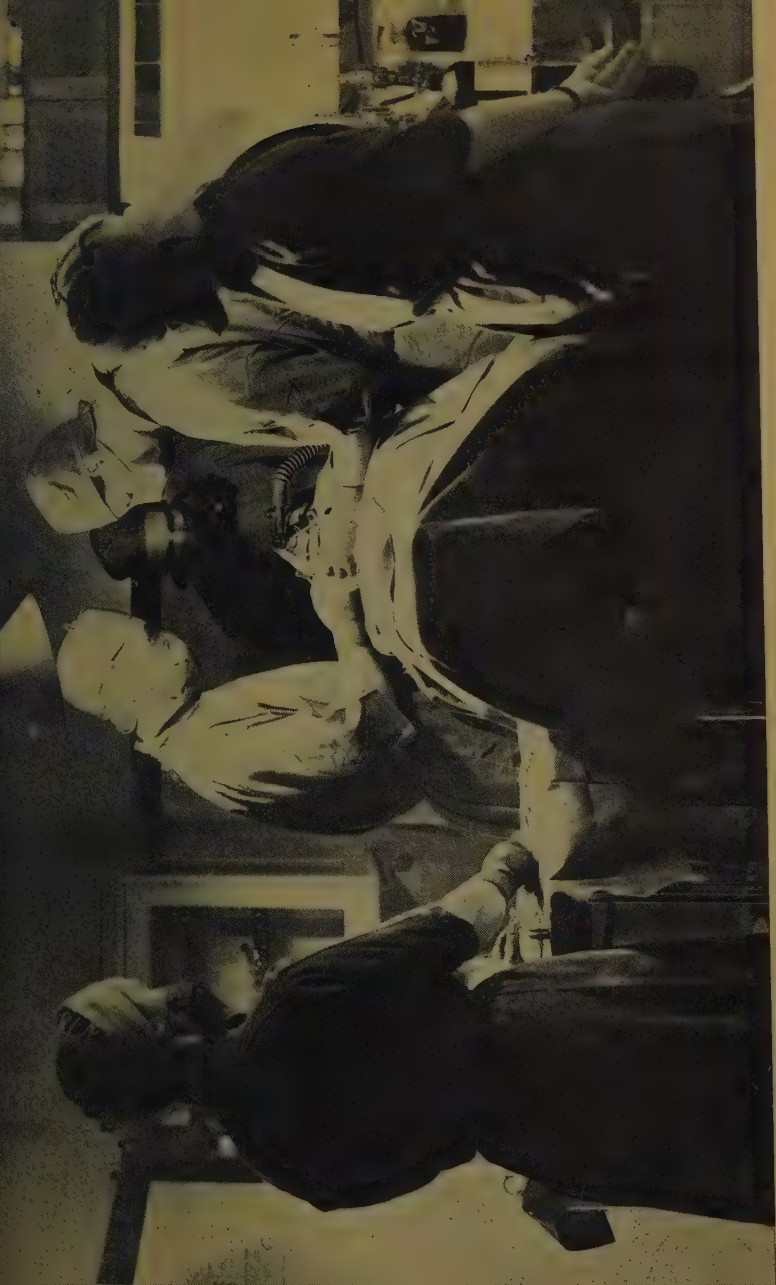
remembered that she had told me that in her belief the corner by the fireplace in her room was the safest part. After this, I had to carry on with my work elsewhere."

. . . . .

Work began on this very thick wall about seven o'clock. It had to be slow. At any time the rescue men might bring down an avalanche on the other side. After taking what precautions they could to prevent a further collapse, they broke through about nine o'clock, to find Miss Thomas alive, but almost impossible of rescue, owing to the weight of material which had fallen and the precarious position in which she lay.

At an early hour a doctor and other members of the staff were in attendance, hoping and waiting to comfort and help the imprisoned victim. From the moment when a hole, very small at first, was cut through the wall, everything possible was done for her by the administration of restoratives and warm drinks. As soon as she could do so, Miss Thomas spoke freely with her rescuers, asking the men to leave her and find "the others." At one time she suggested they should go to their lunch.

All day great work was done by the rescue and demolition party. Scaffolding was erected and struts inserted to hold up the mass of debris. Some members of the hospital staff, including a doctor, entered the corner of the shattered room through the hole in the wall. Risks were run by all, but without avail. The end



THEIR THEATRES BOMBED, THE SURGEONS CARRY ON BELOWGROUND



came suddenly and peacefully just before the sound of a siren told London that planes were again overhead.

### SIX NIGHTS LATER

✓ Not less terrible were the results of the third bombing of St Thomas's Hospital, six days later, when again a giant bomb brought both death and destruction. I am indebted to the Secretary for this description:

"It was Sunday evening, and the staff had finished dinner. Many of us were sitting in the Central Hall, talking and reading. I was deep in a novel when the crash came.

"There was no warning scream of the bomb—only one terrific *CRACK!*—a blinding flash, and utter darkness.

"For a time I was conscious only of choking fumes and dust. Rising, I felt for the back of my century-old high-backed wooden bench. It was not there. I remembered that opposite to me, on similar benches, I had seen our senior physician, resident assistant physician, another doctor, a Sister, and the House Governor. In the darkness and silence of the moment I said to myself: 'They must all be dead.'

"The next moment voices and movement reassured me. We must all have been stunned slightly by the blast. Lights shine from torches and the air cleared. Flames were now coming from the long corridor, which runs through the hospital north and south from the Central Hall. We had evidently been struck in this vital spot.

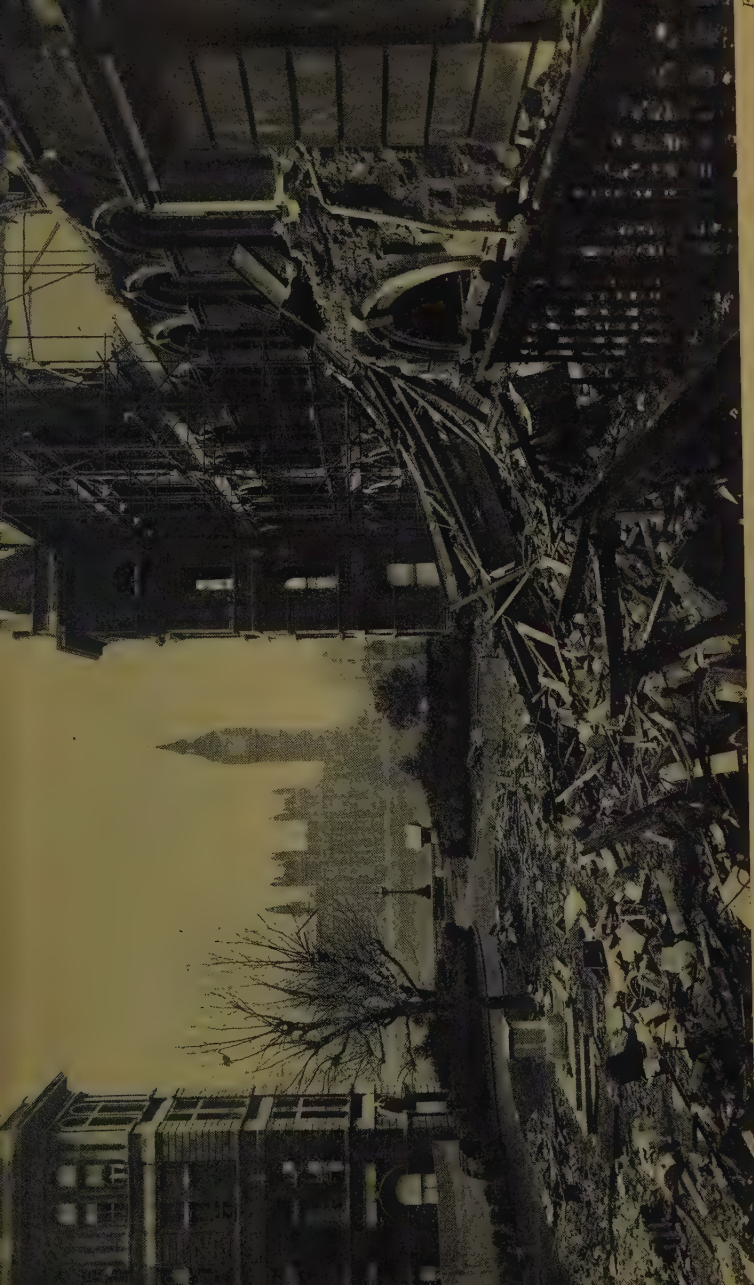
✓“No one can say what any one person did. Everyone was ready for such an emergency. Some went to the wards, some to help the wounded, of whom there were many in the basement. Others rushed to assist and direct the firemen and rescue party, who were making their way into the hospital.

“It was my job to find out who was still alive and who might be missing. The flames made it clear that the dispensary was well alight, that the quarters above, used by the medical staff, had fallen, and that the medical out-patient hall was in ruins. First reports brought to me held out hope that no one was missing. In this belief the rescue party was moving to another part of the hospital when word came that certain members of the medical staff could not be found. They included two of our house surgeons, Mr Spilsbury and Mr Campbell, the Assistant Hospitalier—we still give our chaplains that ancient title—the house physician, a dresser, and one of our first-aid post helpers.

“Theatre Sister, preparing for an appendix operation in the emergency theatre, established in a cellar on the basement-level, had seen Mr Spilsbury walking down the corridor but a few seconds before the explosion. The Assistant Chaplain, with two of the medical staff, were known to have gone after dinner to the Medical Common Room above the dispensary, of which now only the inner wall, with a dart-board still hanging on it, could be seen.

“Rescue work began at once, in what manner I must





AFTER THE TRAGEDY, BIG BEN SURVEYS THE SCENE AT GASSIOT HOUSE



leave the Assistant Clerk of Works to tell you. Without his valuable help and advice it is very doubtful whether any of the missing would have been recovered alive."

This is what the Assistant Clerk of Works, sitting in his basement office, did when the bomb fell:

"It was a very short warning. Hearing the whistle of the bomb—I believe I am the only one who did—I dived for an arched doorway in my basement room; and am jolly glad I did. When the blast followed the explosion, two heavy filing cabinets flew across the room. I staved one off, and the other just missed me.

"After the crack of the explosion, a long, reverberating rumble of falling masonry shook the ground under me. I sensed the direction from which it came. With my torch, grabbed as I jumped for shelter, I made my way along the basement corridor. Hearing people groaning, I entered the canteen, found it wrecked by blast, and numbers of the staff lying injured on the floor. The bomb must have exploded right on our level.

"My first job was to assist in moving the canteen wounded to a first-aid station under Block 7. Turning back to the spot where the bomb had exploded, I searched the main kitchen and found that everyone had escaped by a window.

"I now heard of the missing people, all of whom had been under or near the point at which the bomb entered the hospital. If any were alive, it was pretty plain that they must be under the debris. As I examined the fall,

I saw that one very large girder, slipping down from the top floor, was fixed by upright walls at either end, and had caught much of the masonry falling upon it. It appeared to me possible that some of the missing might be found under this girder.

"I explained the situation as I saw it to the rescue party, suggesting that they tunnel under the girder, which was securely fixed, so far as I could see, and let the debris fall away. They soon got to work. Running considerable risks, they gradually arrived at the place where three of the missing, all severely injured, were lying protected by the girder. These were the Assistant Chaplain (the Rev. Alfred Bird), Mr Nixon, a house physician, and Mr Walker, a dresser. Mr Spilsbury and Mr Campbell were not found until the following day; they had died instantly. [Nurse Forbes and Miss Richardson of the first-aid post were found earlier. Both lost their lives through blast.]

"One of the effects of the explosion was the destruction of the dispensary, a place full of chemicals. Many of the bottles contained spirits. Luckily the ether had been moved to a safe place in the vaults. The dispensers told me that acids were running all over the floor, and they could feel their boots burning before they escaped through a window. Fire followed very quickly. Then came the water from the hoses, washing the blazing spirit across the smashed corridor and over the ruins of the out-patient department, setting that alight also.



BORN AFTER BOMBS, THE FIRST BASEMENT BABY





“For a time the scene was terrifying, but as it was a spirit fire it flared up very quickly and soon burnt itself out. We managed to stop off the main gas-supply before that added to the confusion. Rescue work went on for at least an hour, and only came to an end when we were satisfied that everybody was out who could by any possibility be alive.”

#### WHAT A NURSE SAW AND FELT

One of St Thomas's nurses has recorded her experiences on both these terrible nights. On the first she was resting in bed on the fourth floor of the Nurses' Home, waiting for casualties to arrive, and certain from the scream of falling bombs and the blazing fires which could be seen from the balconies that she would soon be busy. She was right:

“There was suddenly a terrible crash. We had a direct hit. The entire building, I felt, was falling to the ground. The door lay flat on the floor, the window-frame was wrenched from the wall; glass was all over the room, huge lumps of masonry were strewn about, and blinding dust enveloped the dark ghastliness of it all.

“At first I felt stunned and thought I was trapped. In a few seconds I realised I was unhurt. I felt for my torch under my pillow, fortunately intact. With a fellow-nurse in stockinged feet we clambered among the debris, over the dividing walls, which had been blown away.

“We found one of our workers had her neck and

foot badly cut. She was bravely trying not to faint. We bandaged her by torchlight, gave her brandy, and helped her to walk downstairs. She, poor thing, was also in stockinged feet!

"Sister's surprised face as I went into the ward reminded me that I had hair white with dust and was in a petticoat and stockings. A white theatre overall and Sister's bedroom slippers soon helped me to look after the twenty of my companions who had been in the basement. Some were badly bruised and others cut. We gave them sedatives and hot drinks, and soon they were all warmly tucked up in bed. And still those bombs thundered on and the planes burred overhead."

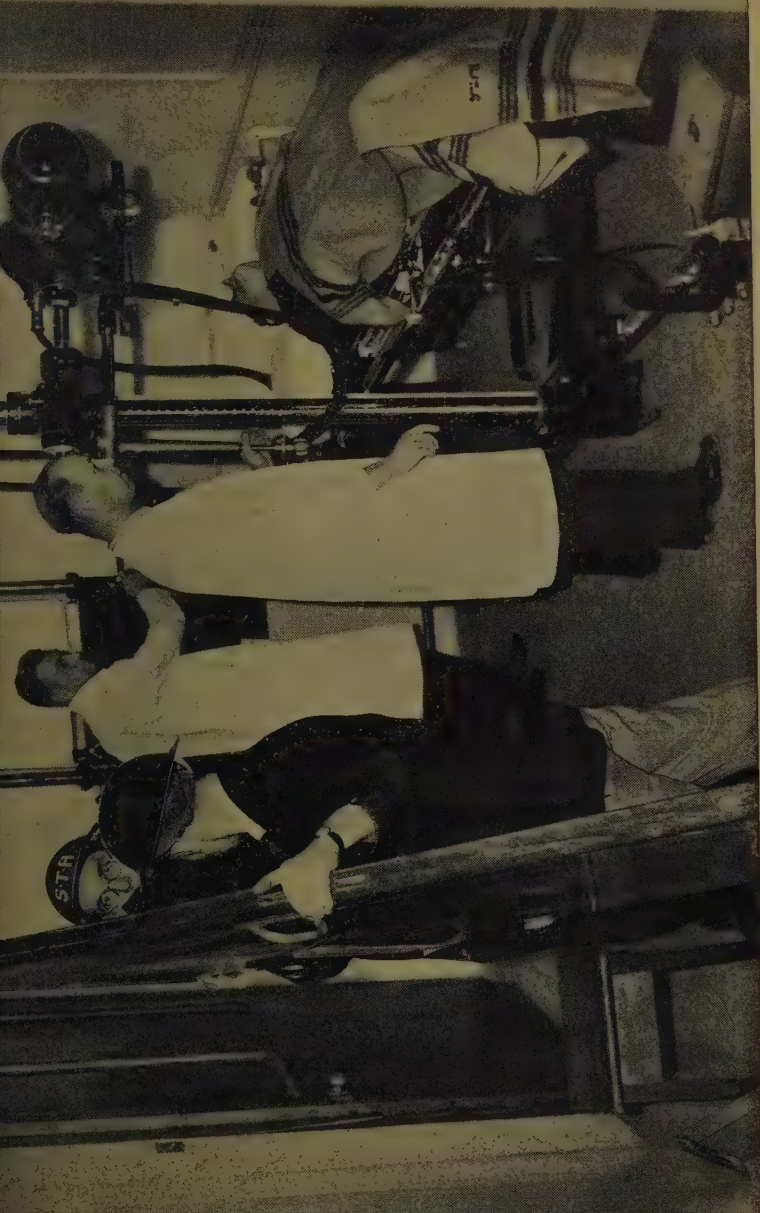
So much for the first night. Here is a later impression, by this same nurse, of "one of the usual nightmare nights of crashing bombs and roaring planes":

"On Sunday night we had another direct hit.

"We were all in the basement, because no one was allowed to sleep on the floors above. The hit was on Night Jericho, between blocks 7 and 8. Only one maid had her legs badly injured. The others sleeping in that basement were shocked and bruised.

"Later I was in the canteen with a friend, as the sirens had gone, and it was a safe place. We had forgotten there was a raid on, then suddenly it was all darkness and disorder, with glass breaking and people screaming. China and glass flew everywhere, many were cut, and to add to the horror hot water began to surge





IN THE BASEMENT, X-RAYS STILL WORK FOR AN AIR-RAID VICTIM



over our feet. We had visions of being trapped and drowned.

"The A.R.P. workers were wonderful. As they got the casualties out we made them comfortable in an X-ray room. The doctors examined the wounds by torchlight; we dressed them as best we could. This was the bomb which fell on the main corridor and killed and injured so many. An appendix operation was arranged for that night in the emergency theatre in the basement. All was ready when the bomb fell. The Theatre Sisters, badly shocked and shaken, had to collect their instruments in several inches of water, improvise a new theatre, and re-sterilise on a Primus stove. The operation was performed by the light of emergency lamps.

"This was a ghastly night—no electric light, no gas, about fifty casualties, and many of them very serious. All our available beds were full that night, but by nine o'clock on the Monday morning all the patients were aboard ambulances bound for country hospitals, where we hoped their shattered nerves and bodies would be restored to health. This gave us the empty beds we required for in-coming casualties."

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Before the month was out in which these events occurred, the King and Queen paid a visit of sympathy. They saw the damage and approved the adapted wards and theatres established on the basement-level. Writing

## HOSPITALS UNDER FIRE

of this "joyous event," in *The Florence Nightingale Fellowship Journal*, a member of the staff says: "The King and Queen spoke to every patient and many members of the staff, including maids and 'pinkies.' The personal sympathy they expressed brought us all a great sense of healing."

RESCUE PARTY—I

THE LAST MAN OUT OF  
LINCOLN HOUSE



## CHAPTER V

### RESCUE PARTY—I

#### THE LAST MAN OUT OF LINCOLN HOUSE

WHAT was it Tennyson said?—"Was there a man dismayed . . . as into the valley of death"? So go the men of the rescue party, light-armed, with levers, crowbars, picks, shovels, and "our best tools—our hands." They face falling buildings, flaming gas-mains, torrents of water, and always bombs. They seek the living, too often they find the dead.

Hear two of these tough men of a rescue party talking. Wilkins is a foreman carpenter, Weekes a builders' labourer, London born and bred. This is their story of the Holborn Rescue Party's "lousiest job":

WILKINS. Some say Lincoln House, but I reckon Y.M.C.A. and Blue Post was worse.

WEEKES. Lincoln House was the lousiest to me. It was my first!

WILKINS. Maybe you're right. It was like going under Niagara Falls to get into that shelter.

WEEKES. Yes—and bombs everywhere. Lots of old property down and burning. Shelter blown out and people trapped in it. Water coming in from the hoses. Wilkins ran through and found a trap under the water, which let a good bit of it away. Shelter was full of bent and twisted pillars.

WILKINS. All blue-pencil dangerous! Steel shutters blown in and brick from the party wall all over the place. Tons and tons on the floor above. Ceiling gone in some places and many supports ready to give way. First thing we saw was a boy trapped by his toes under a pillar. His father was frantic because he couldn't shift it. The boy was a kid of twelve, and kept saying "My leg hurts . . . My leg hurts." Collins said "All right, son, we'll get you free."

WEEKES. Seeing it couldn't be done any other way, one of us said to the kid: "You've got to do this on your own, Sonny. It may hurt you . . . but pull all you can." So the kid gives just one "Oh!" and out comes his foot.

WILKINS. He had a bad crushed foot, so we put him on a stretcher and took him to the pavement outside the post office. I hope he wasn't there when the bomb fell that killed Bushel. Two Australians I had seen there earlier *were*. Next time I saw them they were dead.

WEEKES. Bushel was the driver of the second party, a single man, just about to be married. He had been working for a year without anything happening, and then this happened.

WILKINS. I found one old chap buried under brick and pinned down, but he was mostly worried about his son. We got both of them out after a time, but it was a long job. . . .

WEEKES. That was Grant, who came round to see us





RESCUERS SEARCH THE CELLARS UNDER A RUINED HOSPITAL



not long ago. I knew him at once. Wants a certificate that he was under Lincoln House.

WILKINS. That's easy. . . . There was a pillar interfering with the work. It was the only support of all the lot that was hanging over him. I went to get two big puncheons.<sup>1</sup> As I went I saw an overcoat and picked it up, thinking there might be someone under it. . . . That was the first dead man ever I saw. Another thing I saw when I went up for the bases was a woman lying on the pavvy at the end of Brownlow Street, just in front of the post office, with nothing on, and as black as Newgate's knocker.<sup>2</sup>

WEEKES. Gruesome? You wouldn't expect to find much else. The bomb which crashed into the cellar of the old house next door blew the old brick party wall in on the shelter people. Every support in the shelter was more or less bent and twisted. Beside the old man and his son there were others pinned down by the tubes.<sup>3</sup> It was clear that, if the tubes were cut before the puncheons and other supports were put in, everything above might come down on them. It was nearer eight than seven in the morning when Grant was got out. One tube had twisted itself round the old man, until it was more like a collar that had slipped down his legs. I was glad to see him and his son clear at last. He

<sup>1</sup> Timber supports.

<sup>2</sup> Ace of Spades.

<sup>3</sup> Tubular steel support for the ceiling; one of many put in when the basement of this modern building was transformed into an air-raid shelter.

was certainly lucky—the last out alive from Lincoln House.

Frederick Grant, cold-storage trundler—the last man to be got out—had this to say about that night:

“Frederick Grant, *Esquire*—that’s my name. I was living at Saxon Road, Bow, when this happened. Now I’m evacuated, out of hospital, and under the doctor. Some day I’ll see if my home’s still there.

“Me and my two sons came up on the Sunday to the Hyde Park meetings, and then to the Hall. After that we’re down Holborn when the alarm goes, round about eight o’clock, so we go to Lincoln House, where I’d been before.

“It was a good shelter, warm, with canteen and radio; steel shutters, steel columns holding up the ceiling with iron squares. So we all felt we were in for a good night. Nothing to sleep on, but the floor dry, and the place was warm. George, my youngest, he’s twenty-five, was asleep in the corner, and that was the only part where anyone was really safe, as it turned out. Frederick Grant, Junior—he’s twenty-six, and a trundler like myself—he was nearer me, but not alongside.

“Must have been early morning when I woke with the sound of a bomb in my head. Junior went on sleeping. What happened to George I don’t know. He got out.

“I was just wondering when we should get our lot, when it came. Being wide awake I saw the side



"BELOW THERE!" RESCUERS AT WORK 'MID FIRE AND SMOKE



of the wall going out and coming in again, and the steel columns bending, just like as it might be a nightmare. I rolled over, and buried my head in my arms; the lights went and I felt the ceiling coming down, or perhaps it was mostly the bricks from the wall. Anyway, there I was, with what on top of me I can't say, seeing that I was pinned down and choking with dust. When that was all over I couldn't get up to see what had happened to the boys.

"As I lay I heard two more bombs come down. I tried to call out for help, but couldn't do more than groan. So the next I recollect is that water is coming through the ceiling and there's a smell of burning. Now I know there is fire and water, so I begin to feel pretty certain I shall never get out alive because it's a plain case of being buried, or burned, or drowned, before they can get me. I can feel the water flooding the floor, and I try hard to get myself up a bit, all the time hoping it won't drown Fred.

"After a time I'm thankful to hear voices. Two men with a lantern got through; but couldn't get me out. I was able now to lift up my head and could see Fred, who was lying there, with his legs caught too, saying nothing, and looking like he's in an awful mess, because he's bleeding from his head. I remember thinking, perhaps if he isn't drowned the water may stop that a bit. It was plain I couldn't do nothing.

"There was some talk. A doctor got near enough to give me and Fred morphia. He said he thought they

could get us out all right, but they wanted some tackle.

"I think I must have got sleepy after that because I can't remember how the time went. I know it was daylight when they got us both to the Children's Hospital (Great Ormond Street). I saw them lifting some big stuff off my boy, and by the time they had the piping, which was the steel columns, off me, it was seven or later in the morning. As the bomb fell while it was still dark, I suppose I was under the influence of Hitler, as you might say, for about three hours. Now the doctor says I have nerves,<sup>1</sup> but I think I'll still be able to do a bit of trundling, if that will help the War along."

<sup>1</sup> Neurasthenia.



## RESCUE PARTY—2

AT THE BACK OF THE  
BLUE POST



## CHAPTER VI

### RESCUE PARTY—2

#### AT THE BACK OF THE BLUE POST

A Tuesday in the Autumn of 1940.

Red. (Raid on.)

Call out to Y.M.C.A. Great Russell Street junction of Tottenham Court Road. Wilkins. One light party. With Mr Taber. Mr Taber back and requested two more parties. Woodward, three light. E. Haynes, five light, with Mr Holman. Getting out casualties, with many volunteers from Y.M.C.A. Wilkins also working on Blue Post public-house.

Midnight. All parties back. St Pancras R.P. taking over Blue Post job.

THUS the log-book of the Holborn Rescue Party from eight o'clock to midnight that evening. And this is what Wilkins has to say about it:

"There was eight of us in my lorry. The gas-main was alight in the middle of the road and Jerry was up above. The Y.M.C.A. building was badly battered and the Blue Post public-house down and burning.

"Stretcher-bearers were busy with the first-aid party on the ground floor of the Y.M.C.A., where there was not much to be shifted, but a lot of dead and wounded owing to bomb blast in the road outside. They took me to the top of the building, where there was a man in bed. He was covered up with big slabs of breeze and a muck of dust and debris all over him with a

chance of bringing more down if they tried to get him out.

"I could hear him calling out 'Over here . . . over here.' I man-handled that job. The man came out all right and they soon had him on a stretcher.

"Working my way down from that floor I run into a man that was laying in a pool of blood the size of a dining-table. Seeing they had first-aided him—with a tourniquet to stop the bleeding—we take a door and put him across it, and out he goes. The next is a man with two legs broken. We clear him and, an upturned table being handy, he is soon away.

"Having finished at the Y.M.C.A.—I counted more bombs come down while we were on the job—I was called to the Blue Post public-house. There wasn't much of the place left, and that was burning. Behind it was a club-room connected by a cubby-hole through which meals were passed. They knew there was someone still in it. The wardens had got three out by Hanway Street. Then the top floors came down and shut it off. What we had to do was to find the cubby-hole and see if we could get through that way.

"M'Culloch, a tough old Scot, was with me, sixty-five years if a day, a very big man and a fine worker. Pity was, when we cleared the cubby-hole, it was 2 ft. 6 by 2 only. All I could do to get through. Mac couldn't follow me.

"Seeing the pub was well alight, and only a partitioned wall between it and the club-room, I asked them to clear a way out while I went in to do what I could.



Plane

THE SAGGING FLOOR. AT THE ROYAL CHEST HOSPITAL  
(See page 26)



"I soon found the woman alive. She was calling out, as loud and cheerful as could be, from under a pile of rubbish. The job looked bad. The worst were two big piers laying off at an angle and in no way supported at the top, both likely to come down as we cleared the woman. I began straight away to clear her head with my hands, then Freeman got through to help me, and the pair of us worked at both ends.

"The more we worked, the better she behaved, calling out all the time and giving me instructions. 'Come on, Wilkie,' she'd say, 'there's a bit more there.' You see, she got my name quite quick. At first I was lying on my chest, pushing my arm in and feeling round to find what was keeping the big stuff off her. Feeling my hand she said: 'Take some of the dust out of my eyes, Wilkie.' So I put my hand over her face to make her more comfortable, brushing and lifting bits away.

"Pretty soon I knew she was lying all huddled up against the skirting-board and protected by a great flat stone which had come from I don't know where. It was making an angle against the wall. Another smaller slab was over her head, leaning on the first and the wall. Over all was three to four feet of debris. All in, it was the trickiest job I ever had. The fire was burning hard on the other side of the partition. I was afraid it might come through, but more afraid I was working too fast for safety.

"It certainly wasn't appetising. We were getting drenched by the hoses, because they were trying to keep

the fire off us, and smoke was pouring through all the time.

"First we worked at the woman's head, and so on down towards her feet. She was a slight little thing, so small-made that as she lay there she was more like a child than a married woman. We cleared her head and body first, then managed to release one leg, which came out with no shoe or stocking on. The other was so trapped I couldn't pull it out.

"I said to her, 'Try and turn yourself over a bit and see what you can do.' Then, to our great relief, she pulled her own leg free. Again it came right out of her stocking and shoe. And so, quite barefoot, with only one light dress on her, she was at last on her feet, all smiling and still talking, and saying what an escape she'd had. We offered to carry her over the broken stuff, but she would walk. And she did actually walk over all that rubble and glass, which we found bad enough with our army boots on.

√ "They put her on a stretcher seeing she was barefoot, and thinking she might go to pieces at any time. That was the last I saw of her. It was also the last job I did at the Blue Post, though we were called out to another before the night watch ended. Then I went home, and I'll tell you a funny thing—though I was all right when I left the post, I could hardly knock at my own door. Talk about going to pieces! I'll never blame anybody for that. When I got inside there was I, trying to tell the Missus all about it, and crying like a child."





Fox

AFTER THIRTEEN HOURS A WOMAN WAS BROUGHT OUT ALIVE



GETTING THERE

SHE DRIVES THROUGH  
THE NIGHT



## CHAPTER VII

### GETTING THERE

#### SHE DRIVES THROUGH THE NIGHT

"GETTING there is worst." That is what "Wilkie of the Rescue Party" thought, considering the blackness, the bombs, and the "shrapnel like rain" when the big guns start.

This is the story of a woman who has been "getting there" as a volunteer ambulance-driver ever since the Great Blitz started. She says that when she drove for the first time under the bombs she feared nothing so long as her hands were on the driving wheel. It was when the ambulance came to a stop that she realised the dangers that filled the air. Even then they became less as soon as there was work to be done. This brave woman, one of hundreds who turn out by day and night to take air-raid wounded to hospitals, is small, dark, eager, not equal, one would think at first sight, to a job which has occupied her whole time now for nearly three years. This is her story:

"I am a driver in the London Auxiliary Ambulance Service. I joined up with these people twelve months before the war, believing that war would come, and that my time would not be lost if it did not. My husband is a serving officer.

"They sent me to an ambulance station in Westminster, where I began at once to learn everything belonging to the job. Our Auxiliary Station Officer was a splendid teacher. In 1938 we were all women; the men had not then seen the necessity for joining up; or perhaps they thought they knew all about driving. So did I, until we began to practise night-driving in the Park without lights and in a gas mask.

"We had to take courses in First Aid, gas, and direction-finding. They gave us blank maps to fill in. Everything we learned has been useful. Though driving is still our main object we have had to take a share of first-aid and rescue work.

"Our first twelve months passed quickly. Then came the War, and a flood of recruits. We were glad to help these new-comers.

"Twelve months passed. Then the first Blitz raid on London: I shall never forget that night. We heard the bombs falling, and sat tight until a call came from a street not far from the station. It was my turn for duty, so I went out at once with the Station Officer. The start wasn't easy. It was getting on for midnight and every light had gone out just as we got the call. We groped our way to the garage in the darkness, started up our ambulance and were soon away. A "sitting car" followed us, to pick up walking wounded. It was a private car.

"I can't say that I was altogether happy at the idea of going out on such a dark night with bombs and



A DAYLIGHT BOMB STRUCK THEIR AMBULANCE





shrapnel falling. Once out on the street, we didn't worry a bit about that. We have often thought since when we've been looking over our ambulance the morning after a raid, how little we can remember, though we can see then how many pieces of shell must have struck us.

"We found our street and a stretcher party waiting for us. The two of us got out at once, and began, with the help of the stretcher-bearers, to take our four stretchers out of the ambulance. One was out, both of us helping at the foot-end as usual, when one of the stretcher party yelled 'Get down!'

"Hearing his yell and the whizz of the bomb, we all fell flat on our faces. That one exploded in a near-by street. A second fell as we were getting the rest of the stretchers out—and down we went again. This, I was afterwards told, fell in a canal, quite close, which accounted for the water we found running all over the place on our second trip that night.

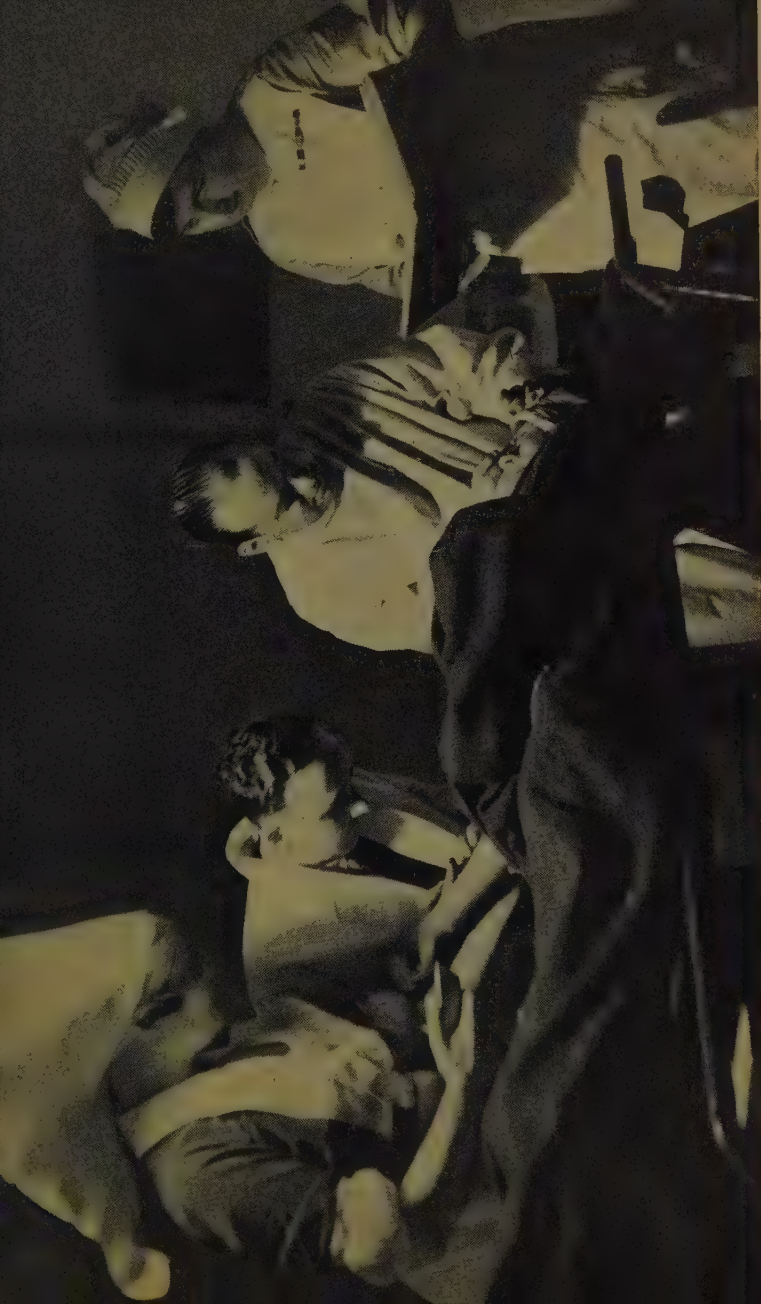
"Our first call gave us a patient we didn't expect, a woman who was going to have a baby. Frightened by the bombing, she had to be taken to the hospital at once. I have never seen anything like the scene in that street. In spite of the bombs, women were standing at every door, asking each other what it was all about, why had the ambulance come? who was going to be taken off? and so on. They followed the stretcher-bearers into the house and were most anxious to help in moving our patient.

"In spite of everything we got the woman to the hospital without mishap. I am sure she had a kind welcome there. On many a freezing night since we have ourselves had the kindest reception at Westminster. Hot tea can be a life-saver when you are driving and working in the middle of a winter Blitz.

"One street, where a shelter was struck, and many poor people badly injured, we reckon our worst night. Three calls came, and one lasted three hours. Here we watched the rescue party risking everything to find someone thought or known to be under the ruins. We were back again next day to see a poor old man brought out, more dead than alive. Amazing how some can come out happily alive after a night under the rubble. Yet it does happen, as we know.

"During the earlier weeks of the Blitz we learned to be very grateful for our first-aid training. We are not called on so often now to help in that way. There are more first-aid workers, and in any case the most important thing is to get the victim quickly to a hospital. You don't want to keep people hanging about when bombs are falling. We cover our people up, see that they are comfortably fixed in the ambulance, and take the smoothest road to the nearest hospital. That takes some finding on a black night, with the way possibly blocked by a fallen house or a new-made crater.

"Our personal good luck has been very great. We have driven for miles over broken glass, and I cannot remember a single tyre-burst. We have walked in the





dark over glass, stones, bricks, and the timbers of fallen buildings, and thanks to our rubber knee-boots, which are very wonderful, and our "tin-hats" we have had neither cuts nor bruises to show.

"My own worst moment was when I was caught up in the dark by a swinging wire. It might well have been electrified. I managed to disentangle myself, but since then have always carried a pair of wire-cutters.

"Station 44 has had a bad time. Nine bombs have fallen in or around it. One crashed into the garage. We lost several ambulances and a perfectly good Rolls Royce. In spite of this our personal casualties total only one. A sad loss, and we can only be thankful that there were not many more.

"So long as the War continues this work will be my occupation. We have two day shifts of eight hours each, followed by two night shifts of sixteen hours each, and two clear days off. In addition we can take one day a month as a holiday, or as many as twelve consecutive days in one year. There are still four of us at the station who joined up in 1938. None of us regret it, and we all hope to carry on until peace comes."



# RINGED WITH FIRE

HOW GUY'S HOSPITAL WAS SAVED  
ON THE NIGHT OF 29<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER





## CHAPTER VIII

### RINGED WITH FIRE

#### HOW GUY'S HOSPITAL WAS SAVED ON THE NIGHT OF 29TH DECEMBER

✓ WALTER BENTLEY, Resident Engineer and Assistant Clerk of Works, in charge of the fire-fighters at Guy's Hospital on this occasion, tells how this famous old hospital escaped destruction on the night of the great London Fire of 1940. In this dramatic story, Mr Bentley, a Derbyshire man, pays tribute to his chief, Mr W. J. Greenwood, Clerk of Works, who organised the fire-fighting at Guy's at the outbreak of war, and whose plans proved so successful when this great crisis came.

Here is what Mr Bentley has to say:

"Everything on the night of Sunday, 29th December, was in the usual good order—fire hydrants, hand-truck with chemical extinguishers, ladders well placed in strategic positions, stirrup pumps in the wards, buckets of sand on the roofs, and watchers with inter-telephones connecting to the main office.

"When the alarm went, soon after seven o'clock, twelve men of the fire squad were on duty, with a rota of students in reserve. The squad are men from the Works Department, all good tradesmen and fine fire-fighters. Operating our own power and light, repair and maintenance work, we have men who have been trained

here from boyhood and can move about the hospital in absolute darkness, knowing each nook and cranny of every roof. For all this organisation we have to thank our Clerk of Works. I joined the staff from a country hospital not long before the Blitz. I was glad to see everything ready.

"Following the alarm planes were soon over, and the first H.E. came down very quickly. The bomb gave the whole hospital a terrific shake-up. Falling on a subway between two buildings, it ploughed through the subway, and destroyed the basement of the massage building. Almost immediately it was reported to me that one of the fire parties had cut off the steam and gas from the damaged building, and no one was injured. I went to see what had happened, and found the whole drive and the Park <sup>1</sup> lit up with incendiaries as if it were day.

"Part of the Nurses' Home roof was now on fire. Watchers and students put this right at once with sand and chemical extinguishers. A report followed that Hunt's House, the largest building in the Park, was in danger from incendiary fire. Bright's House Annexe came next, and then a whole series of reports from various buildings, all to the same effect—incendiaries blazing, fire parties extinguishing, and no fire out of hand.

"An odd thing followed that first bomb. With the shock of the explosion the main breakers on the switch-board were thrown *in*, not out, as you might expect.

<sup>1</sup> Open garden space between the main buildings.

This put on all outside lights! There was a frantic rush to the generating station when it was seen how the lamps were behaving. To have them all alight with the enemy overhead was not pleasant, although you couldn't help feeling the futility of worrying about a few hundred watts when the whole of the place was well lit by incendiaries.

"Very soon a second high-explosive fell on the hospital, hitting one of our oldest buildings, Dorcas Ward, part of the original Guy's Hospital built in 1725. At the same time the floor of Martha, another historic ward, heaved up. All patients were in basement wards, and again no one was hurt.

"I received these reports as I went from place to place, notifying the main office where I was as I moved. About 8.20, there being a brief lull in our bombing but great fires everywhere, I went to the highest point of the hospital, the Massage House roof, to see what things were like around us. Partitions were down in the house, which had taken the full blast of the first bomb; the lift was still working. With one of the men I went up on the roof and had a good view of the night sky. From this point in daylight I could see all the way from Trinity House to St Paul's, and west to the Houses of Parliament. Across the river St Paul's stood out lighted like day, with fires all round. The whole sky was full of fire. We might be getting away with our own troubles, but there was a real danger to the hospital if fires around us were blown in on our older buildings.

I judged that the prevailing wind was from the south-east. Had it gone north it would have been very bad for Guy's, and south would have been no better.

"At this time the most terrifying of the fires near us was one which I could see over the top of the old hospital and facing the entrance to it. This fire was one vast sheet of devouring flame. I can't describe it any other way. I watched one large gaping hole, seeming to be the centre of a fairly large block, which was sending a big flame licking upwards and bending round as the wind blew. It seemed to be reaching out through a building behind it, which was already on fire, with anything else it could touch. The sky was one glowing mass of red. I looked around me and could not see a black spot anywhere.

"When I came down, the Auxiliary Fire Service men were in the hospital asking how we were getting on. We were able to tell them that our only anxiety was the fires they were fighting outside. At this time ours were out, or under control.

"It was now reported to me from Hunt's House and the Medical Block that the roof of our Medical College, outside the hospital, and very close to burning buildings, was afire. This being outside was a job for the A.F.S. I heard afterwards that the students, having put out incendiaries on the roof, could not check this new fire, and so lost a great deal of their personal property on the upper floor, but saved some interesting carvings which covered the walls of one room, and were the



ST PAUL'S AS GUY'S HOSPITAL SAW IT, 29TH DECEMBER 1940



work, I am told, of former students. The building itself was finally saved, but its contents went.

"We now had another lull, which gave me time to go round and inspect the watcher posts.

"Later more raiders came over. A bomb now dropped outside the dental department. The usual shower of incendiaries followed. This renewed attack endangered the students' sleeping quarters. The blast from it blew my own flat round a bit. When I looked at the place next day, sparks, flames, and soot had fairly messed it. Flats where other residents lived were in the same condition.

"Shortly after nine o'clock I reported to the Superintendent that damage and conditions generally were not too bad. Our services were in order, and the hospital ready for casualties if they came. No buildings in the Park had suffered very much so far; in short, everything was under control.

"About the time I was putting in this report a very different one came from outside. The police arrived and requested the Superintendent to evacuate. They said that everyone not wanted for fire-fighting in the hospital must get out. There were only two roads still open to ambulances, and one might be closed by fire at any moment.

"Steps were at once taken to carry the patients to a rest centre outside the zone of fire. Students worked like galley-slaves, wrapping up the sick people and carrying them to ambulances which the police provided. Some nurses went with the patients. Others remained behind.

Casualties were not coming in, approach to the hospital being too difficult. It was worse coming in than getting out.

"Once more we had a complete lull, long enough at any rate for a snatched cup of tea. Then the worst of our troubles began. The wind changed, and freshened as it did so. Before we knew what was happening, over the flaming area outside our walls the whole Park and the hospital were obliterated by a snowstorm of fire sparks. I don't know how else to describe it. You might say it was raining a cascade of sparks. They were so thick and constant that any man who had gone out without his tin hat would have had his hair catch fire.

"With the air full of this sort of stuff, a report came to me that flames were running up the side of the Medical School, which, unlike the College, is inside the Park. Everyone went to work at once. Groups of students and Works Department men formed a chain with Nurses and Sisters. As quick as the nurses handed out the water, the men passed it along, and in a short time that was out.

"This incident showed me what a very serious situation we were still in. I took another quick survey from the roof. It was clear the hospital was now completely ringed by a sea of fire. It seemed to me that nothing but a miracle could save some of our buildings, so close were the outer waves of flame to them.

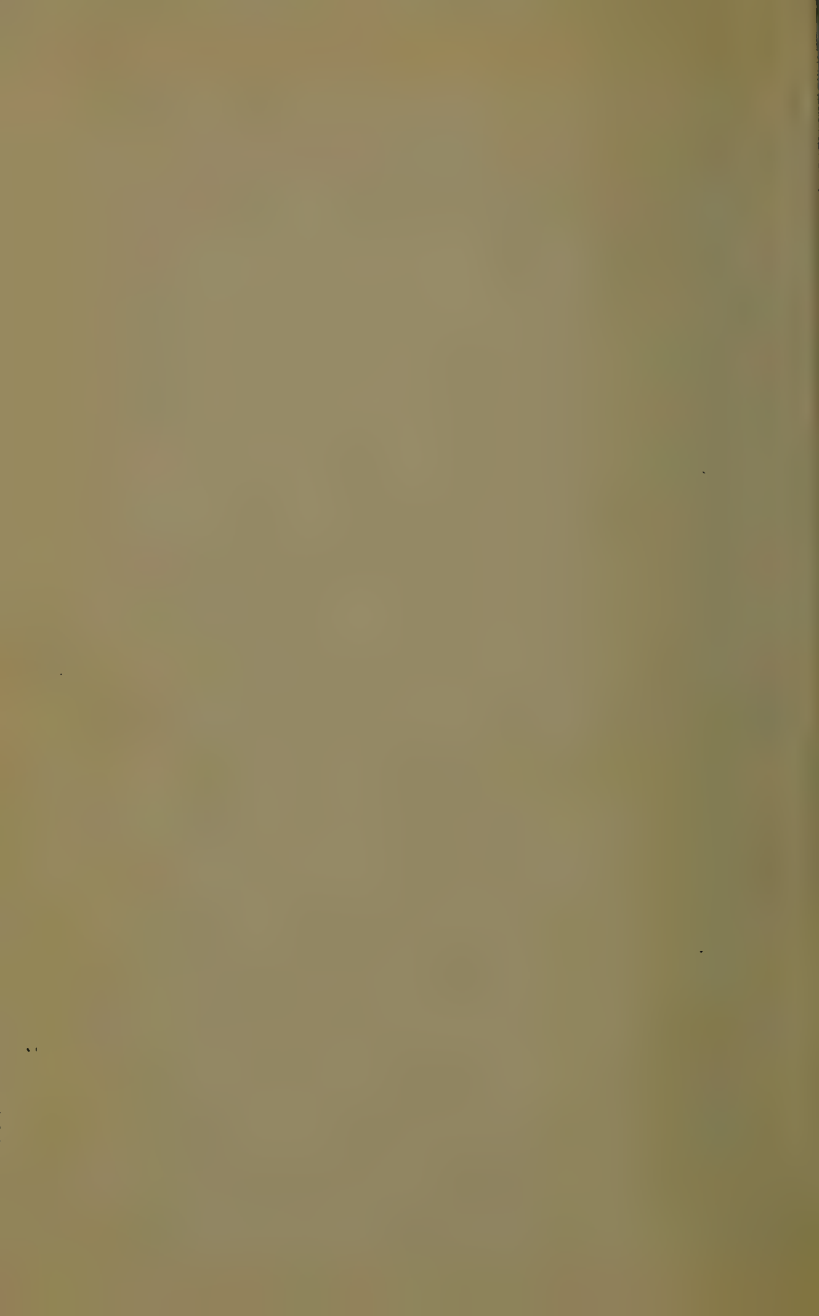
"That miracle happened. When things looked their worst, the wind veered round once more, and it began to





*Topical*

DORCAS WARD WAS BOMBED AND GUTTED



rain. Then the 'All Clear' sounded, and everyone heaved a sigh of relief once more.

"But not for long. Those sparks which had seemed to set the air on fire when they were burning, had been accompanied by clouds of others, which coming over piled up on the roofs and most inaccessible points everywhere. We did not realise how dangerous they were becoming until, blown by the wind, they set light to the roof of Hunt's.

"Seeing the position of this new fire on the top of our biggest building I sent out an S O S call for all possible help. Not only was the building in danger, but on the upper floor we had our deep X-ray therapy machine.

"It was a real hard fight. Those who were using the water had to put on their service masks to beat the smoke. It was a case of the Fire versus the Staff of Guy's. The A.F.S. were still busy outside, and it was not until we got a check on it, and had it virtually out, that they were able to come in and finish it off. We lost one of the X-ray machines,<sup>1</sup> but saved two.

"This last adventure kept everybody on the alert until 3 A.M., when, except for the watchers, most people took a well-earned rest."

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*Postscript.*—It will have been evident from the foregoing modest narration that grave danger threatened

<sup>1</sup> The Hollywood branch of the "Bundles for Britain" has promised to replace it.

Guy's Hospital on the night of the Fire Blitz, and but for the prompt and continued action of the leader and his squads, at some personal danger, Guy's Hospital might have been in ruins.

What would this have meant? Certainly much more than the destruction of buildings. It would have involved the loss of housing accommodation available for patients, with its consequent destruction of valuable equipment, which cannot be replaced at the present moment, the disorganisation of and danger to trained staff, terminating with the cessation of a vital service at a time when it was never so necessary.

The Governors have been wise in making provision to circumvent this danger. They have acquired a large building in Kent, right in the country, where a new Guy's, complete in every detail, will, by the time this book is in circulation, be functioning so that full services will be available if the old Hospital should be compelled to cease its work.

The new Hospital will also be in the nature of an experiment. Reactions to novel equipment and conditions will be noted with interest and recorded for post-war consideration.

MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN—I

THE HOSPITAL WINS



## CHAPTER IX

### MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN—I

#### THE HOSPITAL WINS—THE PATIENT TELLS ALL ABOUT IT

✓ ONE Saturday evening in mid-October, 1940, a very vigorous and healthy young motor-mechanic left the workshop in which he had been repairing and refitting ambulances, with a pleasant sense of a job well done, and a good supper waiting him in Peabody Buildings, Southwark. An omnibus took him very near to a hospital, and another carried him across the river to a spot within two hundred yards of home. His mother would be waiting for him there, a brisk, lively, dark-haired woman, devoted to her son, with whom she lived in otherwise lonely widowhood.

From the bus stop the man took a longer route than usual. That was because an unexploded bomb had fallen in his usual path. What happened then can best be described in his own words; spoken with many a pleasant smile as he lay in a ward of that same Westminster Hospital near which he had changed his bus four and a half months before.

I have never seen a patient in hospital who has looked better in health than this young man, with his dark brown eyes, clear tan-brown skin, and powerful arms

and shoulders—a natural athlete and sportsman if ever there was one. And yet? Well, hear him talk:

“I can just remember putting my foot in the gutter, crossing by the coffee-stall. The next I knew I was lying on my back under the arches, a good twenty yards away, opposite the Wellington public-house, and a shower of sparks was coming down on top of me. I put up my hands this way” (he covered his eyes); “that’s how I lost that” (the little finger was missing from his left hand). “Well, it saved my eyes anyway. How I got under the arches I never knew, and after I saw those sparks, which must have been bomb splinters, I knew nothing until I opened my eyes again—do you know what it is like to come to after being K-O’ed? That must have been about 8 P.M., and even then I didn’t know anything was wrong; that’s the funny thing about it. A woman came to me, leant over and said ‘Are you all right?’ ‘Yes,’ I says, thinking I had had a crack on the napper and would soon be able to get up. She was a civilian, not a nurse. After that I passed out.

“Next I remember being on a stretcher at a First Aid Post in the railway station. I knew I had a bandaged hand and my leg in a splint; numbness, not actually any pain at all. My head was tied up too, but that was only a little place, really nothing to speak about. They had done me up well. A fellow gave me a cigarette. I don’t know whether they gave me any dope or not.

“I was put in an ambulance. Funny thing about that ambulance ride. I had no fear for myself. My only fear







was that the driver might not be a careful man, having heard a lot about smashes in the black-out and seen ambulances piled up where I work. I needn't have worried. That was a lovely ambulance, quiet, and it was like floating in air, the way it was carrying me along. Some weeks later they told me it was an American ambulance, and the driver was a woman, probably an American too. I would like to have thanked her.

"I don't remember ever coming into the hospital. Actually I don't think I ought to have come here, there being a nearer one. They do say the ambulance-drivers like to come here because they get such quick service and are able to get away at once to fill up again. That big fellow with the medals downstairs told me that when he came up to see me one day.

"I woke up in the end bed of this ward under that clock. It was five-and-twenty to one. I remember wondering whether it was day or night, and then, seeing the lights, knew it must be night. I asked for a cup of tea, which I enjoyed very much. Then all was blank for about a week.

. . . . .

"That's what you might call my first stage. During that week they took off my right leg, above the knee, and a lot of shrapnel from all parts. I've got a grand scar across my back from one side to the other. They put in no end of stitches. It's marvellous now. And I had wounds in my left hip and thigh, back of my leg, and

shin, and the thigh wound is still there. It's a big one. There was a big wound on the side of my left heel which was a worry for a long time, and it puzzled them to know how it got there. My shoes, which are all I have left of the things I was wearing—the rest were in shreds and pieces—show a big tear in the left heel. I'm keeping them for a souvenir.

"This hospital must have saved my life half a dozen times while I was unconscious.<sup>1</sup> See my arms?" (He showed three blood-transfusion marks on each.) "But I can't remember a thing about it. They tell me I've been in the theatre about seven times. There was one bomb splinter which went right through my left upper arm from side to side and into the chest. They got that little bit out all right. I think there's still some in my hip.<sup>2</sup>

"When I came out of that week, my chest was paining me terrible. Congestion of the lung, they said, due to blast. Also a piece had penetrated the lung; and that caused a good bit of trouble. They made me wonderfully comfortable. I slept on an air bed until well past Christmas, comfortably propped up, and had oxygen off the pressure tap<sup>3</sup> here to help me along. The nurses couldn't do too much, then or now. Nearly nineteen weeks now, and they've gone like a flash. The nurses are so good you don't realise you're in hospital. They

<sup>1</sup> It did.

<sup>2</sup> There was when he spoke, but it is out now.

<sup>3</sup> An oxygen pipe-line service is a feature of this modern hospital.—ED.



*News-Chronicle*

BOMB-DRIVEN, LONDON CHEST HOSPITAL PATIENTS AWAIT AMEULANCES



can stand a bit of chaff, too, and we do have a laugh now and again.

“All the time I think myself lucky I came here. For a month past I’ve been able to get out of bed and hop about. I go downstairs for electric treatment and massage, and it was this which enabled me to get my muscles up and feel no strain at all after being in bed for so long.

“I sleep well. Breakfast at seven. Out on the balcony for half an hour, from seven-thirty to eight. Those breakfasts are good, with lots of variety: eggs, bacon, ham, sausages, tongue-roll, and jam — used to be marmalade, but not much now. Sister and doctors come when we’re back in bed. At ten downstairs in the physiotherapy department for bending and stretching exercises. After a month I can put on my own shoe and stocking. That will show you what a lot it has done for me. Altogether I spend about two hours there. For a time I had ‘short wave,’ which helped to clean up a bad place in my hip wound. Twelve o’clock dinner. Meat of all kinds, and ale when I ask for it. We can smoke at any time of the day, this ward being for air-raids, it’s a privilege ward. My mother comes every day, and friends come too.

“Poor mother! It’s not been easy for her, but she’s very happy to see me so much better. My friends stay till 3.30, and then I’m on the balcony again for half an hour, after which we play cards, mostly solo, or do a jig-saw—we have a nice lot of puzzles. The library is



marvellous. Twice a week they come round with books: I generally fall for blood and thunder—with a lot of corpses knocking about!

“My employers have been very good to me. My mates send me cigarettes. The first week I was in they actually sent my mother eight pounds ten shillings; and at Christmas they had a whip-round and sent me six pounds to get anything I wanted.

“This hospital has been bombed twice, once since I’ve been here. I didn’t like that. It scared me stiff. So for a week I slept in the basement. Now I’m quite happy to sleep in the corridor again. I’m so much better than I was then.

“I really am feeling very well. If it wasn’t for my leg missing, I can honestly say I wouldn’t feel as if I’d been through anything at all.

“I have been asked how I came to be so fit and able to stand up to such a heavy bombing. I used to do a lot of running, swimming, and sports, and was champion over one hundred yards as a schoolboy in my own area of London. I have always been out in the open air as much as possible, getting down to the sea whenever I could. I used to drink two pints of milk a day, one before going out to work, and the last before going to bed. I also liked my share of brown ale, but never very much. I was born in Lambeth, my father being London-born and my mother from Chatham. I shall be twenty-eight years old in September this year. My school was Hatfield Street, Southwark, and two of my old school friends have



been several times to see me. I am glad to say that I have been promised my job when I am well enough; but it will have to be at the bench instead of being out and about.

“There is one thing I have told myself. If I do have to go into a hospital again, it will be this one.”

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*Postscript.*—Since his story was told this much-bombed patient has continued on his cheerful way to health again. He is now reported: “condition very satisfactory, and about a good deal.”



## CHAPTER X

### MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN—2

#### A HUSBAND'S STORY

SURGICAL skill, good nursing, and the indomitable will of the patient herself have contributed to restore in large measure to active life a London woman paralysed in speech and movement by a German bomb. Her husband tells the story because he hopes it will comfort and encourage many to know what miracles may happen even in the most desperate cases:

“All this happened just after Christmas, to be exact on 29th December 1940. It had been a happy Christmas for me and my wife in our little flat in Westminster. I am glad to think she enjoyed it so much. Three days passed without an alert, and two old friends came to see us on Christmas Day. We had good news of my sons, both soldiers, and my daughter, married to a soldier. I was myself just out of hospital, having hurt my leg some weeks before as I hurried home during an air raid.

“On the night in question we had an alert about 6.30 P.M. and went down at once into our shelter, which consisted of two empty shops, well bricked-up, with their ceilings supported and a short passage between the two. About a dozen of us from the flats above these shops were in one or the other. I was in the

corridor between. My dear wife was at the end of one room, near to a temporary escape door, which opened out into a courtyard.

"An incendiary fell first. Everybody jumped to their feet when they heard it. Less than a minute afterwards came the scream of a bomb. The whole place shook. It caught the top of the building, bringing down three concrete floors and everything on them, including our flat.

"I think the bomb must have exploded before it struck the courtyard. There was a terrible blast from behind. This blew the escape door to pieces, and it was the door which struck my wife. Strange to say, she was the only one of us badly hurt.

"For five minutes we could see and do nothing. The air was thick with dust, so thick that it was hard to breathe.

"Someone shouted 'Look out!' as the bomb fell. I remember nothing more until I found myself, without the pipe I had been smoking, in the second shelter room—blown there without knowing I moved, a matter of three yards, without falling, which was strange, considering my accident.

"When the air cleared I could see that my wife was lying on the floor quite unconscious, and badly hurt. One of the men in the shelter, rushing into the square, met a doctor who works with the A.R.P. people, just as he was leaving the house. He came at once, and there was no delay in getting an ambulance, into which



*Topical*

THE QUEEN MEETS SHELTERLAND BABIES. HOSPITAL NURSES LOOK  
AFTER THEM



they put my wife and one of the tenants who had a slight head injury.

"The police, who had come into the shelter, advised us to stay where we were, as the bombing was still going on. 'Don't worry,' they said, 'some more of the building may come down. The shelter can stand it.'

"At four in the morning a big lot more fell. There were still a good many of us in the shelter, and there being no better place to go we stopped where we were.

"As soon as daylight came I went to the hospital and saw my wife. She was completely unconscious, in fact paralysed, and remained so for six days. They seemed to think that her chances of recovery were very slight. I saw her again that evening, and I have seen her every day since, in the morning before going to work, and again in the evening on my way home.

"After nearly a week she showed signs of being conscious again. As she could not speak or move I hardly dared to think she could recover. The effect of the blow on her head was such that she scarcely seemed to live.

"What has happened since shows me that the day of miracles has not passed.

"They decided to operate, and told me not to expect too much. . . .

"She seemed already better after the operation, smiling a little, though unable to speak. Then some strength came to her hands, and day by day Sister seemed happier when she spoke about her. A day came

when she recognised me, and seemed to know what she wanted to say, and where she was. I knew then for certain things would not be as bad as they had been, and was very thankful.

. . . . .

"Isn't she wonderful? It is now fourteen days since she began to use her hands, and just a week since she stood on her feet for the first time. To-day she can actually walk, with a nurse to help her, if need be. She can also read a newspaper, and appears to understand what is in it.

. . . . .

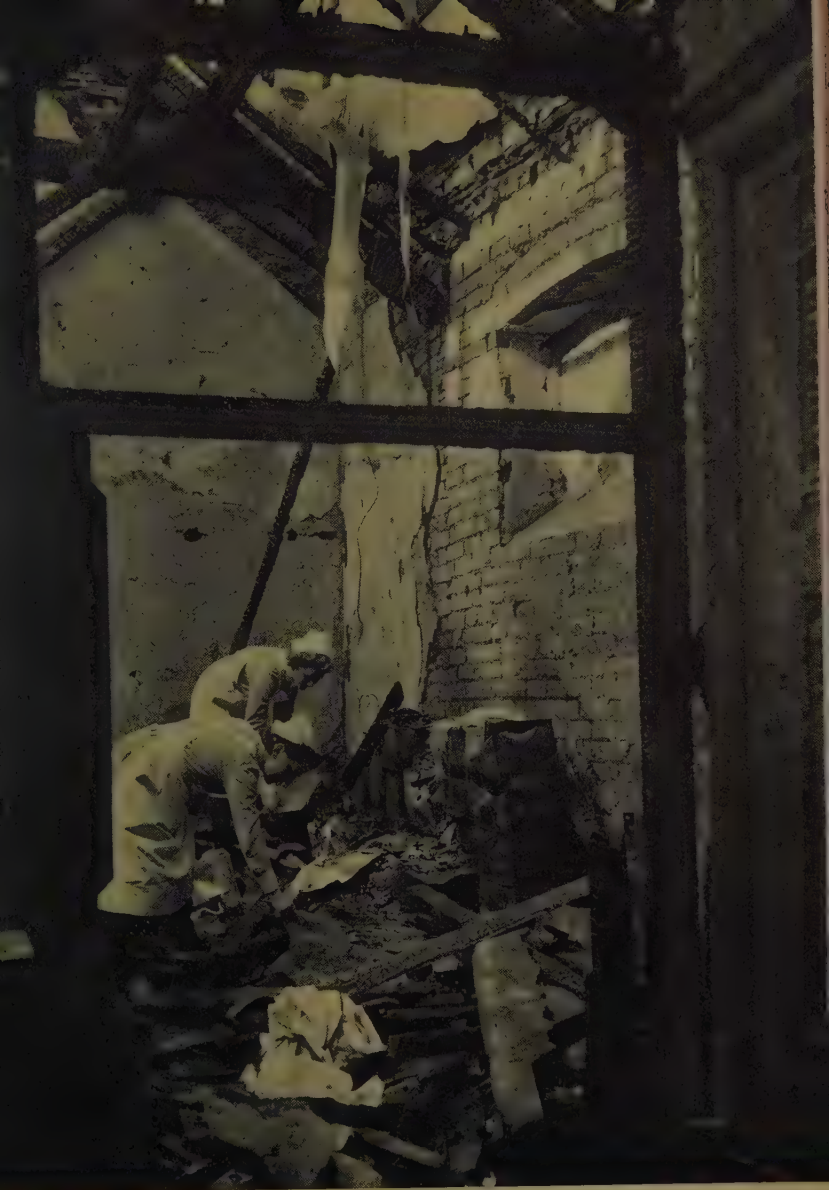
"My wife was always merry, and is still, in spite of all this. She tries very hard to tell us what she wants. Sister can generally understand, and there is a lady in the bed next to her who helps her by making her say small words over and over again. It is rather like teaching a child to speak. She can now say 'and' and 'yes' quite plainly, and counts from one to ten.

"I gave her a letter yesterday from our daughter. She read it carefully page by page. My daughter said one of the children had whooping-cough. She put her finger on that line, made a face to show how sorry she was, and said 'Oh—o—h!' Then she smiled, being pleased that she could make us understand.

. . . . .

"She now tries to do everything, picks up her knitting and fingers it, though she can't knit yet. She is trying





*Topical*

NURSES SEARCH THE DISPENSARY OF A SOUTH WALES HOSPITAL



to write with her left hand, and they think she may soon be able to do that.

“My second son, who is on leave, has shown her his name mentioned in dispatches.<sup>1</sup> He is very happy that his mother understood that. On one of these fine days he is going to take her in a chair round the gardens. I know she will be glad to see the buds and the growing plants. I am hoping that when the summer comes he may take her to Scotland to see our grandchildren. Our week there was always the happiest of the year.”

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*That is the story so far as it had gone. The cure is not complete ; but I think the husband was right. It will comfort and encourage many to know that such miracles as this may happen.*

<sup>1</sup> For good work in motor-cycle reconnaissance near Amiens before Dunkirk.



WHEN THE LIGHT  
WENT OUT

A HOSPITAL SURGEON'S  
STORY



## CHAPTER XI

### WHEN THE LIGHT WENT OUT

#### A HOSPITAL SURGEON'S STORY

*(An Australian surgeon attached to the staff of a great teaching hospital tells listeners in Australia how the Blitzkrieg came to London, and how his hospital, like the people, carried on.)*

THE aerial Blitzkrieg started with a vengeance on 7th September. Cinemas and theatres were showing. Crowds of people were in the streets. I'll never forget that hectic first night. At half-past eleven my phone rang. I was wanted at the hospital urgently. It's only two or three minutes' walk, but how brightly the streets and buildings were lit by the glow of a huge fire! There just wasn't a black-out any longer, and bombs were dropping all over the place.

At hospital, stretcher cases were coming in. A bomb had dropped near the entrance of a cinema not far away. It was just at the end of the show when people were crowding the footpath. Many were killed and wounded.

So the war had started at last, but what an odd collection of wounded. Women and children, soldiers on leave, firemen, a bus driver and his ticket collector, and two waitresses going home from work.

I asked one woman: "Did you hear the bomb coming down?" She said: "Coo, did I 'ear it! I'll say I did, and I lie strite down in the gutter." She was lucky; only

slight injuries of the hand. A Canadian soldier, on whom I later operated, was very disgruntled. He'd been over here all the year waiting to have a crack at the Jerrys, and now his bomb wound was to keep him out of action for a long time. A British Tommy was indignant; passing unharmed through Dunkirk, he'd been bombed in his native London, first time on leave.

During many months of waiting, the hospital had organised plans for handling these casualties. The scheme worked very efficiently. All patients passed through a receiving-room where a senior doctor decided whether their wounds were slight or serious. Minor injuries went to the First Aid Post in the hospital, and after a night's rest were sent home next morning. Seriously injured were taken to wards. Doctors, nurses, and twenty medical students living in the hospital, who were a great help in lifting and undressing patients, bandaging wounds and applying splints, were all busy.

Once in a ward the patient was made comfortable in a warm bed. His injuries were carefully examined. He was given anti-shock treatment and, if necessary, prepared for operation. Some of the injuries were horrible. I will not go into the grim details. But I do want you to know of the brave and uncomplaining spirit in which these Londoners accepted their wounds. There was no weeping, no hysteria, no panic.

Many were the gallant deeds that night. None were braver than the firemen and the rescue parties. To give you an example. A call came to us for a stretcher party



to go to a near-by block of flats. A party of six was immediately dispatched. They'd only just left the door when a bomb fell in the roadway, killing or wounding all. Straight away a second party lined up and set out to do the job. They reached the flats and brought in the wounded.

The firemen were grand. Several were brought in desperately wounded. I'd hardly finished with one of them before he asked me: "How long a job is this going to be?" He said he'd never be able to stick it in hospital with fire engines rattling by every night.

You may wonder, in Australia, why so many firemen are killed and injured. You see, after setting a building ablaze these German savages fly over and drop a stick of bombs on it, just to kill all the fire-fighters and make it spread. But the fires are put out, just the same.

That night, as always, our nurses worked incredibly well. Like hospital nurses in Australia and New Zealand many of them are young, hardly out of their teens, yet they carry on steadily through the bombardments as if they had been trained to war for years.

Not long after the start of the Blitzkrieg I was in the middle of an operation, extracting a bomb fragment from a man's arm, when the air was pierced by the now familiar whistle of a falling bomb. It shrieked, closer and closer. There was a terrific explosion. It had fallen just outside. The whole hospital shook and rattled. After a moment's silence, someone said: "Rotten shots, these miserable Huns."

For the moment we were not greatly upset. That came a minute or two later when the lights in the operating theatre went down to a dull glow, flickered, and then went out altogether. Still, an electric torch was quickly shone on the wound, and the work went on. In a minute or two our emergency electrical circuit came into action and the lights were on again.

We operated continually all that night. The "All Clear" came about six o'clock. Still we remained, half expecting a fresh influx of casualties when daylight made search possible among the wreckage. It speaks volumes for the work of the rescue parties in the black-out that when morning came no new patient was brought to us.

After a cup of tea and a biscuit we went to the roof of the hospital to see the damage. After the noise and fury of that night frankly I expected to see half London in ruins, but there it was, apparently unharmed. Big Ben struck seven o'clock in unhurried and unconcerned tones. That was a note of solid reassurance from the very heart of the Empire.

Now, after nearly two months<sup>1</sup> of these nightly attacks, we have all become quite accustomed to receiving patients and working on them during the raids. Of course there are many nights when, in spite of bombing, not a single patient is admitted. We still have plenty of work to do. War does not put an end to street

<sup>1</sup> The broadcast was transmitted overseas Tuesday, 5th November 1940, at 9.15 A.M.

accidents, factory accidents, and other civilian troubles requiring medical and surgical attention. We take everything that comes if it is of a serious character. Patients fit to move are sent to hospitals in Outer London or the country near by. We have had to evacuate our upper floors, but we still retain staff sufficient to deal with civilian cases, while we keep a number of beds warmed day and night to receive the casualties from air raids.

One evening, soon after the sirens sounded, our own hospital was hit by a heavy-calibre bomb. There was a terrific hiss and crash straight overhead. In a matter of seconds clouds of brick-dust seemed to fill every room, ward, and passage. Everyone was coughing. We all went to our prearranged stations in case it should be necessary to evacuate every patient. The bomb had done less than it might. Not a patient was hurt, and the working of the hospital continued normally. But the chapel on the top floor was wrecked. We'd erred on the side of safety, and many of our patients who had been taken down to the basement for the night hardly knew that we had been hit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The hospital referred to in this broadcast is the new Westminster Hospital, which owed its escape from more serious injury on this occasion, and subsequently when it was hit by another high-explosive bomb of heavy calibre, to its modern construction. The hospital was opened by Their Majesties the King and Queen less than five months before war was declared. It is key hospital to a sector containing forty London and outer suburban hospitals. Its work, as a teaching as well as general medical hospital, has been continued throughout the first two years of war without serious interruption. Air-raid and Service casualties have been allotted special wards.—ED.



BABIES OF THE  
BLITZ

SOME HAPPY ESCAPES



## CHAPTER XII

### BABIES OF THE BLITZ

#### SOME HAPPY ESCAPES

THERE have been many child victims of the Blitzkrieg. There have also been many happy and almost miraculous escapes, in which children have been restored to their parents after hope had almost gone.

The hospitals know these cases. They see children come to them on an air-raid night with life hanging on a very slender thread, and, thanks to the marvellous recuperative powers of infancy, many go out again without a sign of injury to mind or body.

Take the case of two-and-a-half-year-old Anthony, a little Wembley boy. His home was smashed by a direct hit. His father had a fractured heel-bone, which kept him from work for three months; his mother is still suffering from a visional defect caused by shock and head injury. This may be cleared up in time. And Anthony? Wembley hospital records describe him as suffering from "coal-gas poisoning, scalp wound, and shock," injuries not surprising seeing that Anthony was buried so deep in the fallen house that the rescue party, working for an hour after saving the rest of the family, said there was no hope of getting him out alive.

How then did Anthony come to the hospital? Because one member of the rescue party, a local warden who

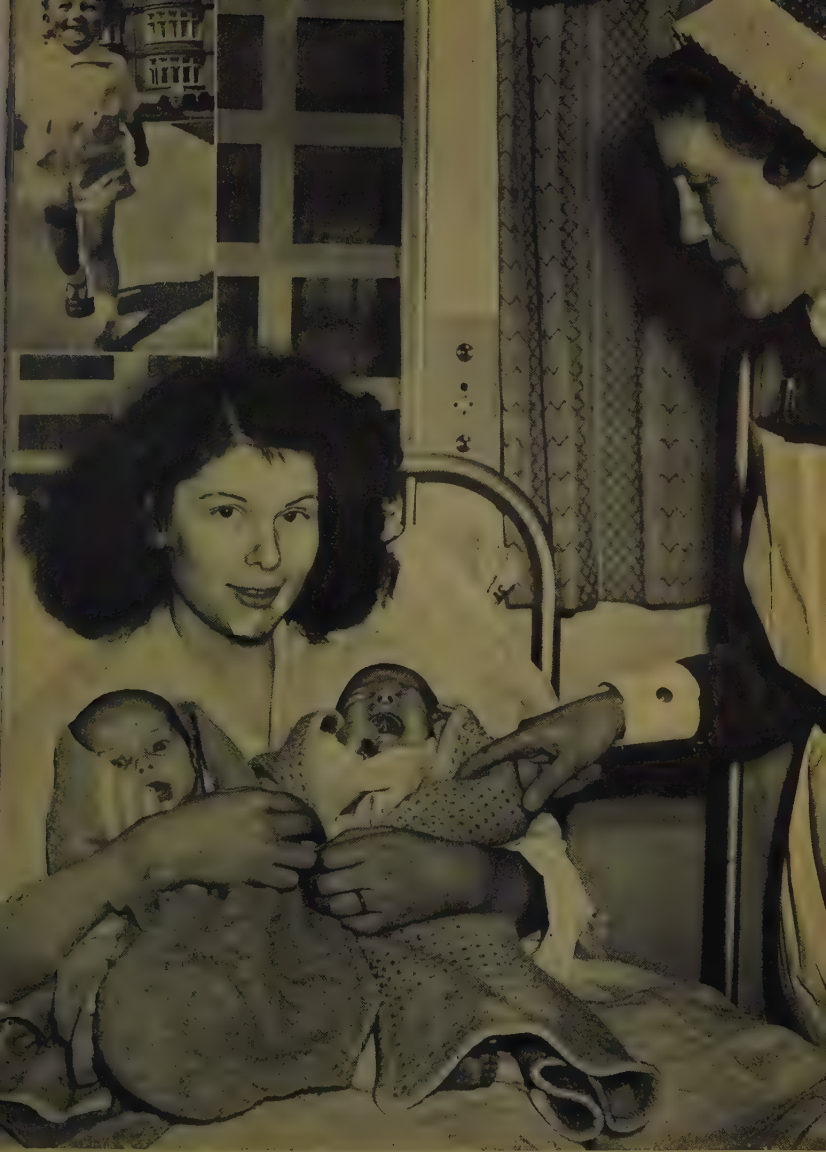
knew the boy, refused to give up hope. "Working quite alone, Mr Mather burrowed on into the rubble, and ten minutes later he came staggering out with Anthony in his arms." So runs the account given to a *Daily Herald* reporter shortly afterwards.

Once at the hospital, Anthony appears to have decided that it was a case for a good, long sleep. Comfortably tucked away with his head-wound mended, he slept the clock round and then—sat up in his cot and demanded to be fed. That was the end of Anthony's troubles. He was soon out of hospital, and here is a picture of him well and happy as a sand-boy. His parents are to-day very full of gratitude to the wardens and the hospital.

Reggie, a Surrey baby, only nine months old, had an escape which in some details resembles Anthony's case. He, too, was buried in debris after a direct hit, but this time the bomb struck the ward of an isolation hospital which was looking after Reggie. This happened on a Saturday night. The next day a photographer took a delightful picture of the little chap sitting up in bed to be fed by Sister. There appears to be a scratch under Reggie's eye. Otherwise he has the appearance of one who has not been greatly troubled by his overnight blanket of brick-dust and ceiling plaster (see page 116).

Reggie was young, but Carol and Edna could give him months and a beating for the youngest victims of an air raid. With their mother, a soldier's wife, these twins were taken to Westminster Hospital after a bomb had smashed, first their home, and then the shelter in





*Daily Herald and Fox*

ANTHONY (*inset*) WAS BURIED; MOTHER AND BABIES WERE BOMBED



which their mother and they were spending the night. All three suffered but slight shock and injuries. The mother was glad of the peace and comfort the hospital afforded, after a night more than usually disturbed, and a new home was shortly found for her and her seven-weeks-old twins, who were finally none the worse for their adventure.

Derek is a case of which any hospital might be proud. This four-and-a-half-month-old child was resting comfortably in his mother's arms when without warning a bomb fell outside their flat. The blast blew the infant against the wall, then on to the floor. Picking the baby up, the despairing mother ran down the street, regardless of danger, until she found a First Aid Station. An ambulance took both to the nearest hospital.

The condition of the child offered very little hope of recovery at first. Derek's head fracture was one of the most complete ever seen in a child of his age. Little could be done except to watch and nurse the case with the greatest possible care. A surgeon has said: "He cured himself; if the fracture had not been so complete, the baby would hardly have lived." That fracture is now healed! It was a week before any real hope could be entertained. Then improvement began, and in the remarkably short space of three weeks it was decided that the baby could be sent to a country hospital. Progress continuing without any set-back, Derek was finally reported fit to return to his mother. Before his final discharge he was again examined at his first hospital,

where he delighted both surgeons and nurses with his general health and intelligence.

Arthur is by no means a baby, but he has every right to be classed as a happy escape, because he saved the lives of his two little sisters when all three were buried in a bombed shelter. Left in charge of these little girls, this eleven-year-old young hero took them to the basement of a house when the warning came. The shelter was hit, the boy received a wound in the shoulder and another in the throat from bomb splinters, and, like everyone else, was buried in debris. Pushing his way through the wreckage and dust, he got his two little sisters out. Having put them in safety he went back to see what he could do to rescue other people. His wounds now were troubling him, and he was in a very bad condition. Exhausted by scrambling again through the wreckage, he had, in turn, to call for help. In a short time he was on his way to Guy's Hospital, where he was soon restored to his own smiling self. Arthur is now evacuated to the country.

Many more such stories could be told. Like the people, the babies of the Blitz are, as the King said, "wonderful."



Fox

REGGIE. A BOMBED HOSPITAL BABY

(See page 114)



THIS PATIENT SAID:

“THE NURSES WILL SEE  
YOU THROUGH”





## CHAPTER XIII

### THIS PATIENT SAID:

"THE NURSES WILL SEE YOU THROUGH"<sup>1</sup>

WHEN you read in the papers that another hospital has been hit by the Nazi raiders, I wonder how much you realise of what that really means? Hospitals in raids form one of the brightest pages in this epic of London in the front line. I know. I have been a patient in one of the best of them during the Blitz. What happens is marvellous.

I was taken in suffering from pneumonia brought about by A.R.P. warden's work. I had a lovely private room in a private ward. That room got so private I hardly ever saw it! The Germans—and the nurses—saw to that.

You're in bed and the sirens go. A buzzer hums in the passage of the ward. Nurse appears with a grand Yorkshire smile. "They're here again," she says, "come along down." Gas mask, dressing-gown, books, anything you want, are put on your bed. It is wheeled out of the room to the lift. A nurse is holding a lift door open for you. The bed, and you, are pushed in. You descend to the bowels of the earth.

<sup>1</sup> Broadcast from London, Wednesday, 3rd October, in "The World Goes By," by Mr W. Macqueen-Pope. The hospital referred to is Westminster.—ED.

There you find the rest of the patients assembling. Walking cases are seated on forms and chairs. People who cannot leave their beds are pushed along until a corner is found for them, or a little room, or a wide corridor where they can be parked alongside the wall. Plenty of A.R.P. officials are about, with tin hats and equipment. Never a sign of bustle or rush.

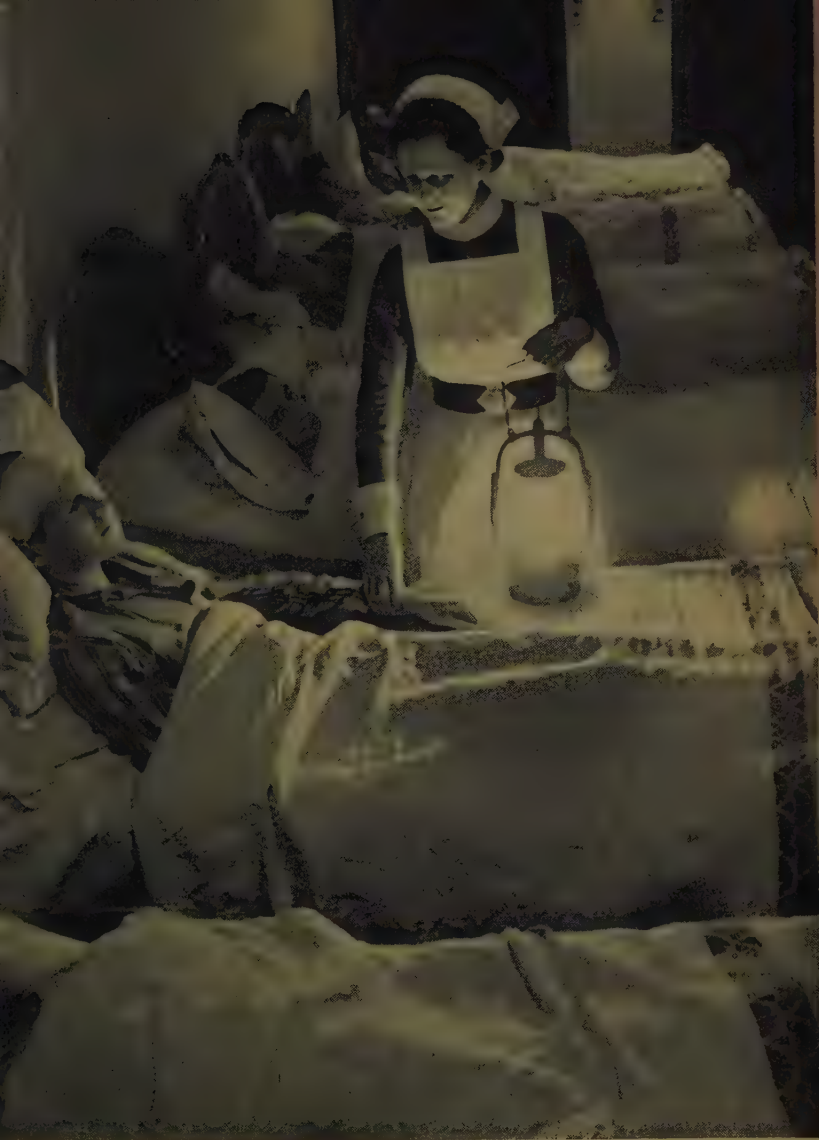
Your nurse manœuvres a position for you with the care of a jockey approaching Tattenham Corner. "You'll be all right here," she says with a smile. "I'll be back." And away she goes to help some other patient.

You lie quietly and read or doze. Maybe you chat with the man in the next bed—or maybe you listen to what is going on outside. In the corner which became my very own I could hear the bombardment.

Nurse comes along periodically. She takes your temperature just as if you were in your own room. Even your meals are served with promptness, and piping hot as well. That was in the daytime. What about the night?

They made a rule to take us down just about 7.30. For several nights I shared a little alcove with another young man from the Private Ward, who had undergone an operation. Behind us was a door with the somewhat ominous sign "Radium Bomb." But we cared neither for the radium bomb<sup>1</sup> nor the German H.E. variety. My night nurse was wonderful. She had me in that

<sup>1</sup> Quite harmless. Buried every night, and as soon as a siren goes, in a well, 60 feet deep.—ED.



*Daily Mirror*

THE LADY OF THE LAMP  
*A Westminster Hospital war-time study*



basement in record time. She saw I wanted for nothing. She would come along in the night hours for a little chat, if one was awake, with a reassuring smile and a pat of the hand. And she would go up to the floor where the private rooms are and come back with all the latest talk of how things were going in the air above us. From that alcove I could hear everything. I heard the gunfire and the bombs—and when the nurse came we would compare notes. It wasn't exactly the acme of comfort down there in the basement, but no one suffered any inconvenience or went short of a thing. The nurses saw to that. My ministering angel would tell me where the bombs had fallen, because she knew I wanted to know—news is my life-blood and business! <sup>1</sup> To others, she was just a soothing, quietening presence who washed the raid right out.

All the patients were quiet and calm. There was never a whimper or a shout.

Came the night when, with a terrific crump, the whole building shook. As if by magic there was a nurse at the end of each bed. "Are you all right?" we were asked. "Don't worry, it's not us—it's just round the corner."

We were all right, and said so. As a special treat we all got a cup of tea. Where the tea was made, how they got it to us so quickly, I shall never know. But we each had a comforting cup in our hands within what seemed a few seconds of the shaking up. Again perfect calmness

<sup>1</sup> The author is a well-known journalist, playwright, and theatrical manager.

and a few jokes from the nurses, who never once turned one hair on their immaculate heads. I believe if we had asked for the top brick off the chimney we should have got it.

Matron would come round, an imposing, reassuring figure. Speaking for myself, we would go off to sleep. We had our dinner down there one night during an early visit of the raiders. Everything was served. One man who was allowed a Guinness, and didn't think he would get it, began to worry. But his nurse hove in sight with it in her hand—not even that was forgotten.

Our nurses are doing the finest job of work I've seen in this war. They know the danger, they know their patients' state, yet they carry on through the worst Hitler can do as if it were normal peace-time. They are ready and you will never catch them napping.

Believe me, it is not funny to be lying helpless in bed when the bombs are coming down in London—but the nurses and the Sisters just wipe out the raid—and get you well. Just to show you, they got me well from pneumonia under three weeks—with air raids all day and night. That's what I call service.

So anyone who has dear ones in hospital at this time need not worry. Whatever happens the nurses will see you through to safety and to health.

MRS D. TELLS HER  
STORY

"I DO HOPE IT'S GOING  
TO BE A BOY"





## CHAPTER XIV

### MRS D. TELLS HER STORY

"I DO HOPE IT'S GOING TO BE A BOY"

"HERE is Mrs D.," said Sister Thomlinson. "She came to us from a shelter seven weeks ago."

"Came to us"—from a church crypt in bombed London to a lovely early eighteenth-century country house<sup>1</sup> in the heart of Surrey, with fruit and kitchen gardens, lawns, outbuildings, a romantic cottage, green fields, and woods.

Could any woman want a better place in which to pass the weeks before her baby is born? To London women like Mrs D. it gives happiness, security, and certainty that, no matter what happens, everything will be done for the best.

"Are you really happy?" Mrs D., shaking with laughter, sank into an easy-chair. When she had recovered from the idea that anyone should ask *her* whether she was happy or not, this bombed-out mother-to-be told her story:

"I'll tell you how I come to be here. My husband is a porter, a shop porter delivering goods. We had three rooms, as nice as could be, in Glamorgan Street,

<sup>1</sup> Ripley Court, Surrey, reconditioned as a hospital by the County Council; equipped and staffed by Westminster Hospital as a teaching and Maternity Centre for Westminster mothers.

Westminster. There were three of us, my husband, me, and my little girl. When the war began, I mean when they started dropping bombs, we evacuated our little girl to my cousin in Ireland. She's four and a half, and she's very happy. I didn't know then I was going to have another. (Hope it will be a boy; somehow I think it will. It ought to be, with this war and all.)

"When the bombs began, we tried our local shelter, but I had to help an old lady out of the cellar because it was too much for her down there. My husband then said we would have to sleep under St Martin's-in-the-Fields.<sup>1</sup> It was a lovely change. We felt really safe there. Everybody was that kind, you couldn't think. There was a nurse. A lady doctor came round every night. We had tea given us, and all quite comfortable.

"After sleeping there some nights, we went as usual to our home one morning, and what do we find but a bomb had come during the night, and it was all in ruins from the blast. Our windows were all come in; bedding was so dirty we can't ever use it, and the cups smashed.

"What with glass over the floor and everything spoiled, I could have cried my eyes out. My husband, he said: 'Thank God we're alive. Take the brush and sweep that glass up and I'll go and see what they can do for us.' I was that proud of him, he took it so well. I got the brush and began to clear up a bit; but when he was gone I just couldn't help crying, and cried till

<sup>1</sup> Crypt of famous church in Trafalgar Square.



*Fox*

SPRING SUNSHINE AT RIPLEY COURT



I thought I could never stop, seeing all the time only bits and pieces and dirt, where I had worked so hard to keep everything polished and clean.

"After this we had to live in the shelter still on account of the bombs. Then one night St Martin's-in-the-Fields was hit, and the bomb went through in among the coffins in the vaults, and the blast knocked the shelter about. When that one came, my husband he picked me up and put me back to the wall and stood in front of me. 'We'll go together,' he said, both of us thinking another must come and finish us.

"Next night we went back to the shelter, and slept on the floor, the bunks being knocked out. It was then that the nurse, seeing that I was crying, and me telling her 'Never mind, it's only me nerves getting the better of me,' said she would telephone to Bessborough Place<sup>1</sup> and arrange for me to be seen by a hospital doctor. If I wasn't already booked up, she said, I could go to the country to have my baby. I told her not to trouble because I thought my own home might be fit again by that time, and I had great faith in it. Also, I would rather have the baby there because I didn't want to leave my husband. She was so kind that, to please her, I went to Bessborough Place. There the doctor said I must go out of London, and he would find a bed for me here. I told my husband this, and he was pleased too, to think that, after all I'd gone through, I was to come here. At first I was a bit lonely, but I must say it was

<sup>1</sup> One of Westminster City Council's ante-natal clinics.

what you would call a relief to come down, and be away from what people have to go through.

"Maybe I get a bit lonely still, with my little girl in Ireland and my husband in London. He's very good, is my husband. He comes down every Sunday and we go for walks together. I show him the country, which he likes very much. Also I tell him how kind they are to me, which pleases him, though he says it's what you look for in a hospital, where everyone is always kind. He says they have patched up our windows, but the kitchen was blown out a second time. I hope I shall be able to go back to our little home, if the Council makes it all right, after the war.

"It's very nice here. We sew, and knit, and we walk in the country. Sister has bought games for us and cards. We make our own beds too. At first they would rather have done it themselves, hospital fashion. Now they let us do it; and it's like being at home again to make your own bed. On the whole I am very well pleased to be here—and I do hope it will be a boy."

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*Postscript.*—It was a girl!



Fox

ANOTHER WAR-TIME RIPLEY BABY





# AFTER THE RAIDS

WHAT THE HOSPITALS  
CAN DO FOR THE BOMBED



## CHAPTER XV

### AFTER THE RAIDS

#### WHAT THE HOSPITALS CAN DO FOR THE BOMBED

A SUCCESSION of ambulances arrive at the entrance to a hospital. Stretchers are taken out, placed on rubber-tired trollies, and move quietly, speedily, into the building. Each carries some man, woman, or child from a near-by working-class tenement, shattered in the first of the Hun daylight raids on London. "This is not war," said a man, hardened to all that war used to mean. In war, as he had known it during four long years in France, men fought against men, with equal chances. This was something different.

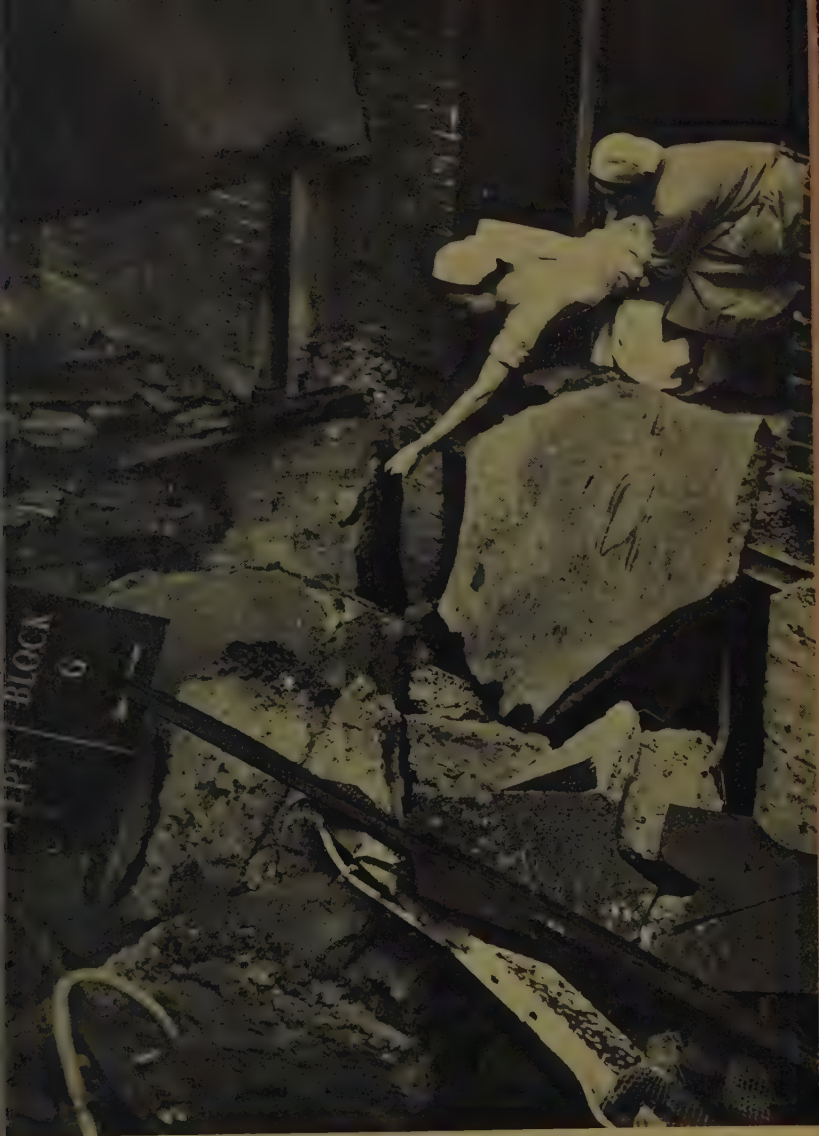
The cavalcade was certainly a sad one, and in some respects more sad than those which flowed through the casualty-clearing stations in France. Yet it was not without a redeeming feature. At least these poor people were coming to a well-equipped hospital not far from the scene of their misfortune, and already they had passed through the hands of first-aid workers. Within a few minutes of their arrival they would be placed in warm beds, oxygen would be given them to breathe if required, and, after careful consideration of their case, they might get a new supply of vital energy in the form of blood or plasma, freely given by generous and

sympathetic donors from places as far distant as the United States.

Such are the wonders of the newer hospital treatment, evolved largely since the Great War of 1914-1918, that the war-stricken victim of to-day's German atrocities stands a far better chance of recovery than he ever did before. There are a number of new drugs, discovered and made in Great Britain, which attack the sources and neutralise the effects of dangerous germs. They also make possible the quicker healing of wounds, lessening the length of a patient's stay in hospital.

Even when a limb has to be removed, as must be the case sometimes, the surgeon and his patient are equally well assured that the loss of a useful member will not hamper the latter as seriously as it would have done not many years ago. Improved methods and new mechanical devices have combined in these latter days to rob amputation of its terrors. During the great wars of Marlborough and Wellington the old soldier with his wooden leg was a common object in most parts of England, especially in the villages, to which veterans returned to sit on the ale-house bench and tell tales of Blenheim or Waterloo. Where is "old peg-leg" to-day? He may walk with you, sit at a café table, take a drink, rise, and continue his travels without ever betraying the fact that one of his legs is not what nature gave him.

Miraculous? Not a bit. Unless you allow the term for the skill with which the surgeon prepares a man's limb for the support it is later to receive. The Ministry of



*Wide World*

"COME," SAY THE NURSES, "HELP US TO CARRY ON"



Health has issued an excellent little pamphlet on this subject, in which reference is made to recent works giving fullest possible instructions in this matter.

Did you notice that when that man in the café, having finished his drink, rose from his chair he put his hand on his knee? Many men do that, if they are no longer young. "Peg-leg" had a special reason. When he did this, his fingers pressing lightly on the knee put the mechanism of an artificial knee and leg "in gear." This done, the legless man could rise and walk as naturally as you or I might.

These new artifices delight the modern surgeon. "The efficiency of these limbs," he reflects, "is superb. Why should I condemn a man to a life of painful hobbling by 'saving' his leg, when I can assure him of a happy and useful life with an artificial one?" So we have, to-day, our one-legged aeroplane pilots and car-drivers, and when peace comes they will enjoy their golf, even dancing—I cannot say as much for football—as before. Only intimate acquaintances need know anything of their loss.

Chief triumphs in mechanical-limb making have affected mostly the lower limbs. Arms are not so amenable, though they, too, have their new devices. If a man has lost his hand he may still grasp and hold many objects, such as a knife, fork, or spoon, pipe, book, or golf club. Knowing this, surgeons are not too anxious to have a man get into the habit of using his "good" arm too quickly. By so doing he may grow lazy, and

disinclined to learn the art of using to best effect an artificial arm or hand. The latest idea is to supply motive power from the good side to the disabled. Braces traverse the body under the clothes, and the movement of one arm will work the finger locks on the other at the will of the user. Thus, for example, an active right hand can hold the knife and the artificial left grasp the fork. And so the meal proceeds.

There is another branch of surgery which achieved great fame during the last years of the Great War and continued to make progress when peace came. This has to do with the scientific reconstruction of features disfigured by wounds. Thanks to the skill and daring of a group of surgeons, who were determined to do everything they could to restore the heroes of 1914-1918 to a place in social life after they had healed their wounds, we owe advances in this new science of an equally remarkable character. Already work has been done in plastic surgery of which the public has heard very little. One day the whole story must be told. Many examples of this work in peace-time might be cited. I saw a little girl come into a great London hospital with a mole on her face which extended from forehead to chin. By a long series of skilful operations the whole of this disfigurement, which, had it been allowed to remain, would have made her unfit for employment, was entirely removed. Beauty took the place of the unsightly growth. So, too, in the case of a boy who had spent the first eleven years of his life in and out of hospitals, and



who must have remained a hopeless cripple, the newer technique enabled a surgeon to heal a congenital deficiency. After a long series of most painstaking operations, the boy was able to wave his crutches in the air and begin a normal life after thirteen years of disablement.

It should bring consolation to many who, rightfully, hate war, to think that the horrors of the bomb have stimulated successfully this humane and very difficult branch of surgery. Here, again, it may be remarked that new drugs, tending to the quicker healing of torn surfaces, have contributed to make the task of the plastic surgeon easier, largely because he is not so troubled with complications arising from infected wounds. Scarring and contractions after operation are also less evident. The wound becomes clean more rapidly, the patient "heals himself," and the work of reconstruction can begin sooner.

In whatever is done by the surgeon, the patient must lend a hand. He must take care of his health after he has left the hospital, and follow instructions faithfully. He has lost, shall we say, a nose, a chin, or an ear. None of these can be given him in one day. It may be months before he is "finished." All the time he will have the personal satisfaction of knowing, and his friends will share the pleasure with him, that whatever he may have to go through, in the end he will look once more like any other man. But he must be patient; extensive reconstruction must always be by stages.

Not long ago I had occasion to talk in hospital with a very gallant young seaman who, after escaping two torpedo shipwrecks, was hit by a bomb fragment as he ran across a road in London to a well-known sailors' club. In this mishap he lost the half of a perfectly good nose. In his hospital bed he was quite content, even happy. Told that he would one day be given a new nose, he joked about his affliction, and was inclined to boast a little of the good fortune which a straight nose might bring him. He knew what was going to happen to him. One day the surgeon would ask him to go to a quiet little hospital in the country. Three weeks would be taken in the first stage of the work. Six weeks for another process, and three weeks more would complete the whole operation. Three months!—and a lifetime of satisfaction to follow.

“Things are never so bad as they seem” is a good motto which is comforting many victims of the Hun in British hospitals to-day.

HEROES AND HEROINES  
OF THE MEDICAL SERVICES



## CHAPTER XVI

### HEROES AND HEROINES OF THE MEDICAL SERVICES

ALL the world knows how King George the Sixth, moved by deeds of heroism on the British Home Front, for which no military cross or medal could be awarded, instituted the George Cross and the George Medal.

What epic stories may yet be written of this new Georgian age, its chivalry and gallantry, endurance and sacrifice, when even the bare details of awards, as reproduced in the daily Press, can thrill us! Here are some of these details relating to early awards made to doctors, nurses, ambulance-drivers, hospital porters, and other heroes and heroines of the Medical Services. In this book two of these tales are amplified by personal narratives. The rest should be read in the light of the chapters telling "What the Stoker did" and "What the Siren said."

#### GEORGE CROSS

*(Posthumous)*

ALBERT ERNEST DOLPHIN, Hospital Porter, South-Eastern Hospital, New Cross. 1940.

A high-explosive bomb fell on the kitchens of Ward Block 1, killing four nurses who were in the ground-floor kitchen, and injuring the Night Sister and patients

in an adjoining ward. Nurse Sole, who was in the ward kitchen on the first floor, was thrown through the collapsing floor on to the ground-floor passage. With other helpers, Albert Dolphin rushed to the site and found Nurse Sole pinned by a block of masonry. While they were working, the wall of the cover-point into which the passage led was heard to crack, and subsequently collapsed. The other workers had ample time to jump clear before the masonry fell. Dolphin remained where he was, and his body was subsequently found lying face-downwards across Nurse Sole, with his head towards the wall which collapsed on him. When found, Dolphin was dead. Nurse Sole was later extricated, still alive, though severely injured. There can be no doubt that Dolphin, although aware that the wall was about to collapse, deliberately remained where he was, and threw himself across Nurse Sole's body in an endeavour to protect her, which he succeeded in doing at the cost of his own life.

### GEORGE MEDAL

F. COLLINS, Hospital Porter, London Homœopathic Hospital.

After extinguishing fire bombs on and about the hospital, Mr Collins had returned to the building when it was hit by an explosive bomb. He dashed immediately to the site of the damage and showed great courage in going among the falling masonry and assisting in the rescue of a doctor and nurse trapped in the Casualty Department. During this he sustained injuries to his head and knee through the collapse of one of the floors, which precipitated him into the basement. In spite of his injuries, he insisted on carrying on with his duties until relieved some hours later.

DR HENRY NORMAN GREGG, Emergency Medical Service,  
Coventry. 1940.

Dr Gregg, on the night when the City of Coventry was heavily bombed, showed a high degree of courage and resource, which contributed to the saving of a number of lives. While fires were raging, bombs falling, he coolly continued to go, partly on foot, and partly by bicycle, from one incident to another, administering morphia to those trapped under wreckage, and doing first aid under conditions of extreme difficulty and danger. These qualities of courage and devotion to duty he had previously shown during other air raids. Officers on central control on this night confirmed Dr Gregg's readiness to proceed to incidents with complete disregard of the intense bombardment and very real personal danger entailed.

MARY SYBIL JOYCE NEWMAN, Nurse, Borough Medical  
Services, Southampton. 1940.

Nurse Newman was visiting her parents at Bitterne when heavy raiding commenced. An H.E. bomb struck two houses. In one four were killed. In the other Mr Hatch, senior, was blown out through the front door into the road. His son Albert was trapped in the building, being suspended almost upside down and held by his ankles. Mr Hatch having been cleared by Home Guard, Nurse Newman attended his injuries. Albert Hatch was then discovered. Rescue work was attempted through a hole in the debris. Into this hole Nurse Newman went, in spite of falling debris and escaping gas, and comforted and quietened the boy, who was in an extremely excited condition. Several times she almost collapsed in the poisoned atmosphere, but carried on until Hatch was eventually released. The boy being in a shocked condition, she obtained

hot-water bottles and coffee and looked after him until the ambulance arrived. During the whole of the time this eighteen-year-old nurse was perfectly calm and carried out her work efficiently. Her conduct inspired others to carry on with the rescue.

DR DANIEL CRAWFORD LOGAN, Assistant Medical Officer of Health, Resident Medical Officer.

DR MUSTAPHA KAMILL, Hospital House Surgeon, Clayponds Emergency Hospital, South Ealing, W. 5. 1940.

A time bomb having penetrated the roof of the diphtheria block at the Clayponds Hospital came to rest among the debris on a bathroom floor. Drs Logan and Kamill, having had previous experience of bombings, first evacuated the patients in this and an adjoining block, and then, regardless of any danger to themselves, they prevented the possibility of great damage to the hospital buildings and houses adjoining, and may also have been the means of saving life.

DOROTHY MAY WHITE, V.A.D., British Red Cross Service, Horsham and Woking. 1940.

Miss White was one of three Voluntary Aid Detachment workers on duty at the Village Hall, Sussex, when a high-explosive bomb was dropped on the District Nurse's cottage next door, completely demolishing it. They immediately went to the nurse's assistance, and found her alive, but badly injured, in the crater which had been the cottage. Lifting the nurse out with great difficulty, they carried her to the Village Hall. While her colleagues were doing all they could for the nurse, Miss White went to the other end



of the Hall to heat some water. Another bomb now fell on the Hall itself, demolishing the end where the injured nurse lay, killing her, injuring severely V.A.D. Pitceathly, and fatally injuring V.A.D. Barnes.

With no thought for herself, V.A.D. White scrambled over the debris and gave all the first aid she could to her injured colleagues. All dressings and equipment had been buried by the explosion. Having got V.A.D. Barnes on to a stretcher, with the assistance of the police, and eventually into an ambulance, and finding that nothing more could be done at the Hall, Miss White went down the road to help other casualties. She attended to one, and found three more dead or dying. She then went round to all the cottages to find if anyone else was missing or needed attention. Aeroplanes were still flying overhead, dropping delayed-action bombs. Miss White's coolness and courage continued to be an example to all. Her own house being rendered uninhabitable, she carried on day after day in the village, helping in every possible way, and was a real strength to those around her.

VIOLET ELEANOR REID, Junior Nurse. 1940.

An enemy aircraft dropped five high-explosive bombs in the grounds of an asylum. One hit the edge of the roof of the kitchen of the women's block, in which eighty-two mental patients were housed. The bomb demolished part of the building. Steam and hot water escaped from damaged pipes. The lights failed. Four women patients were cut by flying glass. Nurse Reid and Nurse Simpson, who were working in the kitchen, were seriously injured. Both were subsequently taken to the infirmary, where they were under treatment for some time.

In spite of injuries, loss of blood, and deafness, and

the darkness in the building, Nurse Reid remained calm and showed great devotion to duty in attending to the mental patients and her injured colleague. After pacifying the patients, who gathered round her in a confused condition, she went to the help of Nurse Simpson. Unaided, she carried her upstairs and attended to her until a doctor arrived. She then returned to pacify the patients and give them warm coats. She refused help for herself until all were cared for, and when at length she was persuaded to go to the first-aid post in the hospital she walked there, with help, protesting that Nurse Simpson was much more seriously injured. Subsequently testimony was borne by the authorities at the hospital to the fact that her cool and cheerful conduct prevented the confusion among the mental patients developing into what might have become a panic.

DR ANDRE BATHFIELD, Resident Medical Officer, Royal Chest Hospital, London.

MISS CATHERINE MCGOVERN, Assistant Matron, Royal Chest Hospital, London.

MISS PATRICIA MARMION, Staff Nurse, Royal Chest Hospital, London.

On another page, Assistant Matron McGovern has described the bombing of the Royal Chest Hospital last autumn. The narrative gives the circumstances under which, though bleeding from their wounds, these three organised and assisted in the removal of injured patients when the whole face of the hospital was blown out by a high-explosive bomb, refusing to leave until all were safe. Staff Nurse Marmion, transferred to another hospital, as a patient, was bombed again and gave immediate assistance to other patients.

DR MALCOLM MANSON, M.C. (Great War), Medical Officer of Health, Emergency Medical Service, Wood Green. 1940.

A heavy H.E. bomb causing the collapse of a tunnel, a number of people were trapped under the debris and the clay which had fallen through the cavity. Dr Manson arrived on the scene within a few minutes and immediately assumed direction and leadership. For nearly three hours he worked actively in the release of persons trapped, giving medical aid, and all the time keeping effective control. Throughout this period he was in grave personal danger from frequent falls of clay and from the imminence of collapse of a further portion of the tunnel. At one period he was lying full length on the heap endeavouring to release a man partially buried, when the lookout man shouted "Run for it!" Dr Manson ignored the warning, and continued his efforts for the trapped man. There was a large fall of clay. The doctor was struck by a large piece full in the back. He was partially buried and had to be dragged out feet foremost. He rested for a few minutes only and then, in spite of severe pain, carried on work until it had to be abandoned on expert advice. Dr Manson's pertinacity, courage, and disregard of personal safety set a wonderful example, and was no doubt responsible for the saving of a number of lives. He sustained injuries which required his detention in hospital.

EVELYN GERTRUDE THOMAS, Matron, West Bromwich and District General Hospital. 1940.

Large fires were started in two buildings near the hospital, followed shortly by fires on the roofs of swimming baths opposite. The hospital had only one side open for evacuation. Miss Thomas arranged for

the removal of patients, while at the same time dealing with incendiary bombs in the residents' quarters. Had a fire developed in this block, one of the main lines of retreat would have been cut off. At this time Dr W. S. Walton, M.O.H. West Bromwich, came to see if he could help. Whilst he was talking to Matron a high-explosive bomb fell on the hospital laundry, completely demolishing the building. The blast of this bomb blew Matron and Dr Walton, several yards. She picked herself up, coolly arranged her cap, and without any sign of agitation proceeded with the evacuation of the patients. Her coolness and courage set the note of calm efficiency, and her bravery in dealing with incendiary bombs single-handed saved the centre block from a fire which would inevitably have resulted in considerable loss of life.

DR OSCAR MADELEY HOLDEN, Medical Officer of Health,  
Croydon. 1940.

A heavy bomb hit a Report Centre of the Borough, completely demolishing it. Three telephonists were killed instantly, and two rescued alive. One was trapped under tons of debris, but able to communicate with the rescue party. She had a severe wound and was in great pain. Dr Holden, at great personal risk, and without regard to safety, crawled under the wreckage and proceeded, under the most difficult conditions imaginable, to administer morphia, and so alleviated her sufferings. Dr Holden was only able to come out by crawling backwards. During the time he was working debris was continually shifting.

WILLIAM PENDLE, Stoker, Hospital for Sick Children,  
Great Ormond Street, London. 1940.

When his hospital was bombed, Pendle proceeded to draw his fires, shut off steam, and make all as safe as

## HEROES AND HEROINES

possible, not withdrawing until all was done. When waist-deep in water he had to struggle to reach ground-level. His personal account is given in Chapter I.

### COMMENDATION

*(for Gallantry)*

DR HARRY WARREN, Medical Officer-in-Charge.

MRS WINIFRED MAY WARREN, State Registered Nurse,  
No. 1 Mobile Aid Post, Maidstone. 1940.

In the course of severe bombing, several persons were reported trapped in a cellar below a demolished house. Rescue and demolition squads attempted to clear a way to the cellar, but found the floor above had collapsed. Eventually a small coal-chute was uncovered, and although there was great risk of further collapse of the floor above, Dr Warren and Sister Warren, his wife, slid feet-first through the chute, taking dressings and morphia with them. Unfortunately, those in the cellar were beyond aid. As the structure appeared to be about to cave in, Dr and Mrs Warren were pulled out head-first through the chute.

### BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL

JOAN WESTERBY, Ambulance Driver, Emergency Medical Service, Coventry. 15th November 1940.

Miss Westerby, twenty years of age, made no less than eleven separate journeys from the E.M.S. Depot to different bombed areas in the city on the night of its heaviest bombing. Her coolness and courage, and the masterly way in which she drove her ambulance to and from the hospital, evoked the highest praise and admiration of all members of this post. She was on duty from 7 P.M. on 14th November until 7.45 A.M. on 15th November, and back on duty at 10.15 A.M. asking for more work.

*Postscript.*

## GEORGE MEDAL

Since this book was prepared, many more George Medals have been awarded. The King having honoured three members of the medical emergency services of St Thomas's Hospital, whose names were modestly withheld when Chapter IV was compiled, we can now name:

H. R. B. NORMAN, Resident Assistant Physician,

P. B. MALING, Medical Student, and

H. E. FREWER, Assistant Clerk of Works.

The following is the official account, appended to these awards, and should be read with the stories told by the Secretary and Mr Frewer on pages 45 to 49:

After St Thomas's Hospital had been hit by a H.E. bomb it was found that two of the staff were trapped. Mr Frewer formed a rescue party and was joined by Dr Norman and Mr Maling.

The debris had crashed through the ground floor into the basement. The dispensary stores had been destroyed and the alcohol and acids caught fire. Gas was escaping and masonry was continually falling. Mr Frewer led the rescue party. Dr Norman, assisted by Mr Maling, burrowed into the debris and gave morphia injections. They succeeded in extricating the casualties.



WITHIN THE CHAPEL THE LAMP STILL BURNS  
*A Westminster Hospital picture*

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